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The Nation.

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EDITORIAL

# ALL IN THE GAME

Sports used to be a metaphor for politics, but now sports is politics, or at least it has usurped the role politics plays in American public life. Most newspapers have sports pages, but now some newspapers are sports pages. *USA Today* gives its core readership of traveling businessmen sports first, with the weather a close second. The networks used to cram their sports news into Saturday afternoons. Now they rearrange their daily programming to accommodate the schedule of games and meets. That's where the money is, after all.

Recently, the two premier news organizations in America—*The New York Times* and CBS News—demonstrated the new priorities. *The Times*'s executive editor, Max Frankel, told Geoffrey Stokes of *The Village Voice* that the Week in Review section of the Gray Lady's Sunday edition would go to press at midnight Friday instead of 4 P.M. Saturday, due to a logistical squeeze. "When for some reason there's not enough press capacity," he told Stokes, "you're obviously not going to give up your front page, and you *can't* lose sports, so it has to be the Review." In other words, it's more important for a paper of record to report ball scores than to analyze the week's events.

CBS's self-evident decision was to let a tennis match final at the U.S. Open run over into the time for Dan Rather's *CBS Evening News*. Rather flew into a rage and walked off the set in Miami to complain to a higher-up. The network went black for six long minutes. Now, it's no tragedy to lose a few items on the nightly news, which is hopelessly superficial to begin with. And who can't live without an up-to-the-minute news fix in The Week in Review? What's too bad is that the media pretend to help us understand the world, but cover politics as if it were a horse race and give us stats instead of facts.

PAPAL METAPHYSICS
I.F. Stone

MEESE PLAYS MONOPOLY
Jerry S. Cohen
Jonathan W. Cuneo

CASTRO'S ECONOMIC REFORMS
Marifeli Perez-Stable

ECOFEMINISM
Kirkpatrick Sale

GWENDOLYN BROOKS
Clara Claiborne Park

A LIFE IN HISTORY

# THE ODYSSEY OF DANIEL BOORSTIN

JON WIENER

When Daniel Boorstin retired on September 14 as Librarian of Congress, he ended a sojourn in the public eye that began in 1953 with his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee as a friendly witness. Although he avoided writing about his HUAC experience in subsequent years, it subtly shaped his scholarship and returned to haunt him at the two critical turning points in his career: his decision to leave academia in 1969 and the 1975 Congressional hearings on his confirmation as Librarian of Congress. Boorstin's career demonstrates the political possibilities created by conservative commitments, and also the intellectual cost of going to Washington—a marked deterioration of his intellectual work.

It all began in 1953, when HUAC turned its attention to the universities; Harvard was at the top of its list, and Boorstin had been a Communist for a year as a Harvard student. When the subpoena arrived, Boorstin was a 39-year-old historian at the University of Chicago. Although he was by then a conservative, there's no question that Boorstin disliked McCarthyism. Unlike a few former Communists who did not wait to be called, Boorstin did not volunteer information and gave his testimony only after being subpoenaed and under threat of a contempt citation. But he did give HUAC everything it wanted. He named names of Communist Party members he had known—his two college roommates and his adviser in history at Harvard, Granville Hicks. (Only half of HUAC's other Harvard witnesses named names, and only a quarter of all academics subpoenaed by HUAC

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# LETTERS.

## CONTRADICTION

*New York City*

In 1925 Max Eastman became the first person to draw the world's attention to what became known as "Lenin's Last Testament," in which the father of the Bolshevik Revolution made known his desire to oust Stalin from the Soviet leadership. American Communists and their supporters lashed out at Eastman's report as "a veritable goulash of incoherent lies" and branded the story and its messenger as "the product of an enemy of the Russian Revolution." When the full text of the will was finally published in *The New York Times* in 1926, Stalin described it as all "rumors and gossip."

The world eventually came to know and acknowledge the accuracy of Lenin's Last Testament. The treatment accorded Eastman decades ago bears strange resemblance to the attack launched on Robert Leiken, this time in a would-be review of his book *The Central American Crisis Reader*, by Perry Anderson in the June 20 *Nation*. Anderson is perturbed because he charges that "never before translated internal documents," whose contents he does not let readers of his review know about, are supposedly "documents of no confessable source." Anderson finds it "astonishing" that even Walter LaFeber praises the book for recognizing those documents as "especially significant," to cite LaFeber's published blurb. What those documents reveal is that long-term Sandinista aims are not the self-proclaimed ones of democracy, pluralism and nonalignment but the creation of an orthodox Soviet-style Marxist-Leninist regime.

Of great importance for demonstrating Sandinista strategy and tactics is the publication of Sandinista National Liberation Front (F.S.L.N.) founder Carlos Fonseca's "Last Testament," written shortly before his death in 1976. In it, the movement's leader inveighs against the supposed treacheries of other F.S.L.N. leaders, particularly Daniel and Humberto Ortega and comandante Jaime Wheelock. Perhaps had Anderson known more about Nicaragua, he would have realized that this critical document was given to foreign embassies in 1984 by none other than Tomás Borge, who hoped to embarrass the Ortega brothers and Wheelock, with whom he was engaged in a brutal internal struggle for power.

Anderson refers to LaFeber's blurb as "ensconced on the sponsor's sofa between [Robert] McFarlane and [Elliott] Abrams." His point is to make it appear that a single liberal/radical fell for a conservative book. Anderson fails to note the endorsement by major critics of U.S. policy, such as former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White, Viron Vaky, Robert Pastor and Richard Millett. Anderson's comments only confirm White's observation that "conservatives will find too many articles by revolutionaries," while "liberals will believe the reactionaries overrepresented." It is not surprising to find that *Commentary*'s reviewer, George Russell, attacks Leiken for including "the dismissive judgment of the leftist British peer, Lord Chitnis" on the 1984 Salvadoran elections; for favoring negotiations with the Salvadoran guerrillas; and for presenting evidence that seems to suggest that "the huge income and landholding disparities of these tiny, turbulent republics" might be seen "as the dialectical basis for justifying armed revolution."

Attempting to correct Leiken, Anderson refers to "illiterate paragraphs" that supposedly reveal that Leiken does not even know Central American history. According to Anderson, Leiken assures his readers that Central America "won its independence from Spain with the aid of the United States: In fact, it gained independence from Mexico, and neither needed nor received any help from North America." It is here that Anderson reveals just who knows something about Central America. Had he read Walter LaFeber's essential *Inevitable Revolutions*, Anderson might have learned that Central America "had been the backwater of the Spanish Empire," became "independent of Spain in 1822" and that its political leaders hoped for American aid. Mexico did try to conquer the area in 1821, but a power struggle defeated what otherwise might have been "a vast Mexican empire." It was after that Mexican defeat, in 1823, that a United Provinces of Central America declared its independence, with a Constitution modeled on that of the United States.

Instead of dealing seriously with the Leiken volume, Anderson resorts to a methodology that has more in common with Joe McCarthy and Joe Stalin than with Karl Marx: i.e., his assertion that Carl Channell and Oliver North's "bagman," Robert Owen, met with Bretton Sciaroni, who in turn met with Bruce Cameron, who is "Leiken's alter ego." It is a technique usually associated with Anderson's alter ego, Alex Cockburn, who has already described me as a "notorious anti-Sandinista." To that charge I proudly plead guilty. The Sandinista record, including the recent revelations of serious abuse of the most fundamental human rights, offers enough evidence to make one anti-Sandinista. Perhaps when he leaves the world of ideology and looks at reality, Anderson, too, will wake up. *Ronald Radosh*

## ANDERSON REPLIES

*Dorking, England*

Ronald Radosh, of course, is not just a "notorious anti-Sandinista," as he puts it, but a winsome apologist of Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War, which, he has been explaining recently to the audience of *The New Criterion*, delivered Spain from the jaws of totalitarianism, making it safe for democracy and NATO in time to come. Naturally he hopes Calero and Co. will perform the same historic service in Nicaragua, if thanks to the Central Intelligence Agency rather than the Condor Legion. If any further sign of the nature of Leiken's enterprise was needed, Radosh's rush to defend it with this wretched potpourri would be enough in itself. Lenin's Last Testament is completely irrelevant to the volume. My review did not mention Fonseca's later writings, and made no charge of forgery. What it did was point out Leiken's inability to say from where he had got "items found on captured F.M.L.N. leaders" and who had "authenticated" them, and noted LaFeber's lapse in endorsing a volume of such obvious *contra* connections. *Nation* readers have since learned more from Tony Jenkins of Leiken's activities for the Nicaraguan "freedom fighters" [see "Beat the Devil," July 4/11, 18/25, Aug. 1/8]. "Illness" suddenly prevents Leiken, at the end of a voluble outpouring against Jenkins in *The New York Review of Books*, from discussing that. His doctor says it would tire him too much!

As for the quaint delusion that Central America won a struggle for independence against Spain with the aid of the United States, one can only assume that the devotion of the Leikens and Radoshes to it must be a retroactive projection of the *idée fixe* that the United States is the guarantor of Central American independence against the Evil Empire today. But if the dunce's cap fits, let them wear it. The facts are these: Mexican independence was proclaimed by the conservative commander Augustín de Iturbide in February 1821, and in September his Tri-Garantine Army marched into Mexico City. In that month, Yucatán, a province within the viceroyalty, declared its separation from Spain and in November its incorporation in the Mexican empire that Iturbide had founded. The kingdom of Guatemala, the subordinate region of the viceroyalty that extended from Chiapas to Costa Rica, followed suit. There was so little struggle against Spain that it was the Spanish Governor himself, Gabino Gainza, who issued the official declaration, in collaboration with the local landowners, "to prevent the consequences that would be fearful in the event that the people should proclaim it," and organized the incorporation of the kingdom into the Mexican empire in January 1822. Fighting then broke out in the province of El Salvador against Mexican, not Spanish, sovereignty; the resistance was subdued by January 1823. In March, however, Iturbide's regime collapsed at home and Mexican troops withdrew. The independent republic of the United Provinces of Central America thus came into being for the first time, in July 1823, when only Chiapas opted to remain in Mexico. The United States had about as much impact on these events as on the election of the Pope that same year.

*Perry Anderson*

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# EDITORIALS.

## The Last Hurrahs

The Reagan Administration has just sixteen more months in which it can act to leave its imprint on American life and policy in this century. It has chosen to act in three dramatic ways: to conservatize the Supreme Court, to institutionalize U.S. intervention in Central America and to rationalize relations with the Soviet Union. In a sense, all that has gone before in the Reagan Era is prelude to this grand finale. Fiscal reform, cold war bluster, right-wing rhetoric and military follies from Grenada to the Persian Gulf have been as cherry-bombs to the effulgent fireworks that will burst between now and Inauguration Day, 1989.

The three campaigns seem disparate on the surface, but they are logically linked in both policy and politics. The seating of Robert Bork on the Supreme Court represents Reagan's last chance and decisive opportunity to repeal, or at least contain, the corpus of liberal practices and egalitarian ideals that have retarded the ascension of his corporate constituency to absolute power. The social ideology of supply-side strategy demands inequality, deregulation, privatization and a considerable amount of repression: precise-

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ly the values Bork has championed in his long and lamentable legal career. If Reagan's vision of an America free of constraints on the privilege and power of rich white men is to succeed, he must have a Supreme Court to sustain it.

After Bork, the *contras*: Reagan began waging war against Nicaragua his first months in office, and although the effort severely crippled his Presidency and hobbled his conduct of foreign affairs, he has not given up the dream of re-establishing American dominance in the whole of Central America and the Caribbean. Reaganism raises the fear of Soviet military expansion in the hemisphere, but that is boilerplate for the more pressing danger of the U.S. imperial shrinkage in the Third World. If the *contra* war should fail, his whole Third World project will have essentially flopped.

And finally, détente. Reagan has used the Red menace to focus the great show of patriotism he staged to dramatize his national agenda. The Soviet threat was also useful in producing the gargantuan defense budgets that have stimulated the long economic recovery, uneven as it is. But the war economy is counterproductive. Without some demobilization, the huge Federal deficits, which bedevil Republicans more than Democrats, can never be substantially reduced. And without a reduction in U.S. overseas military expenditures, the dollar deficit will continue to grow. Moreover, nuclear diplomacy is no longer politically expedient. Much to everyone's surprise, not least the Administration's, a superpower arms treaty is now required for the economic health of the country and the political survival of the Republican Party.

Reagan's last lurch into history will meet formidable opposition from many quarters. Liberals have decided to make the Bork confirmation the first great test of their comeback. Democratic candidates for President have all condemned the war in Central America. On the other hand, a significant Republican constituency opposes détente and arms control, and Reagan has to contend with his own right if he wants a missile treaty with the Russians.

By now Reagan must know that there is no such thing as a free lurch. Despite his ringing rhetoric he is not above making deals. Already there is talk in Washington of an issue exchange: If it came to that, would Reagan give up *contra* aid for approval of Bork—with a summit and treaty with the Russians thrown in as a sweetener? It has not come to that yet, and the trading season is still far off. The Democrats have little to gain from a deal. Among their voters there is no groundswell of support for Bork or the *contras*, nor the slightest grass-roots antipathy to a nuclear arms agreement. The handful of Republican moderates in the Senate might make the best traders, for in the states where they abide (Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Connecticut, for example) they are caught between the conflicting exigencies of party loyalty and voter activism.

But at this juncture it looks to be a fight to the finish, with complex politics and nonnegotiable principles transcending party lines and political loyalties. As always, the politicians cannot be trusted to stick to their guns on any of the points. The only proven method of enforcement is popular action in whatever arena is available. And no deals.

# Papal Metaphysics

I wonder if a pious unbeliever, who has been browsing reverently among the medievals, may take issue with the Pope's appeal in New Orleans for greater emphasis on metaphysics. I was charmed by it and felt myself back in the twelfth century's University of Paris.

But the Pope's message also reminded me of an encounter here several years ago with Ivan Illich, that dazzling medieval-style dialectician, in one of his visits here from Mexico. He suggested—and I can hardly believe it, even as I repeat it—that one way to deal with the problem of hunger in the Third World was to change the definition of hunger. I brashly asked Father Illich whether he had ever tested out this theory on a hungry Mexican peasant. He brushed the question aside as irrelevant and ignorant. From his loftier metaphysical perspective, the validity of a dialectical proposition does not depend on empirical tests but on whether it contains internal contradictions. If not, then that hungry peon was suffering not so much from malnutrition as from a grave deficiency in logic.

Of course it would be unfair to attribute any such syllogism to this Pope, who has often demonstrated his sympathy with the oppressed everywhere. But it does show where an undue emphasis on metaphysics can lead even as compassionate a Catholic theologian as Illich.

The Pope, who taught philosophy in Poland before he became a bishop, not only stressed greater emphasis on metaphysics in Catholic schools but its stricter supervision by ecclesiastical authorities. Those, even bishops, are not necessarily infallible, as some of the most brilliant medieval philosophers learned to their sorrow. Like them, our own resident heretic Father Charles Curran was barred from teaching theology at Catholic University and exiled to secular Cornell University because his views, like Roscelin's and Abelard's, annoyed the hierarchy.

The Pope in his homily laid equal stress on the teaching of the Gospels. It seems time to recall again that this is not always compatible or even on speaking terms with metaphysics. Indeed it is hard to find metaphysics in the Gospels.

St. Jerome, who gave the church its Latin Bible and expressed the humble and antimetaphysical side of the faith, once asked in a commentary on Galatians, "Who reads Plato and Aristotle anymore?" He replied, "Only a few old men in corners," and then added in a proud reference to the first Disciples, "but our rustics and our fishermen—the whole world resounds with their wisdom!"

Indeed, the simple truths preached in the Gospels by and for humble men, like those preached by the Hebrew prophets before them, are more urgently relevant to humanity's survival than ever. As much cannot be said of metaphysics, of which they were wholly ignorant.

Even the invocation of the Greek philosophical term "logos" at the beginning of the fourth Gospel is not as metaphysical as it looks. A simple test will show why. A Greek pagan translating the term by the meaning it had acquired three centuries earlier in philosophy, would

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have translated John as saying, "In the beginning was reason," and identified the logos or reason with God, Stoic style, the immanent source of order in the universe. But to the Christian as to the Jew of that time the term "logos" was only a Hellenized echo of Genesis—logos was not "reason" but the Word by which God had created the heavens and the earth, a metaphor of theology, not metaphysics.

Christianity got its metaphysics not from the Bible and the Jews but from the pagan philosophers and the Greeks long after the New Testament was written. Then it appeared in efforts to rationalize Christian mysteries: the Trinity, the Eucharist, the virgin birth and original sin, doctrines crystallized long after the Gospels and not relevant to their ethical teaching. Even in the heyday of Catholic dialectics, millions lived and died, in piety and mutual kindness, blissfully ignorant of the fierce disputes and heresy hunts metaphysics had ignited amid the learned but often contumacious few. It is doubtful whether any of the humble were barred at the Pearly Gates because they could not explain whether the Trinity was One in Three or Three in One. It is also doubtful that God—if there is one—was as impressed as we intellectuals are by St. Anselm's brilliant ontological proof of his existence.

It is not by renewal of metaphysics that the church since John XXIII has gained new respect but by applying Gospel teaching freshly to the particular anxieties of the various oppressed. Those cannot be appeased by sterile dogmatisms cemented in a subservient metaphysics, policed by ecclesiastical authority.

Metaphysics and theology have their place of honor in the curriculum amid the rest of the human heritage, but not as sources of oppression, as in the Middle Ages, or in Teheran today, nor as urged by other Khomeinis on the fundamentalist fringes of Judaism and Christianity as well as Islam. This Pope is too humane and enlightened to be counted among them, but a certain convergence is disturbing. The Pope's distaste for dissent was made explicit when he met with the American bishops.

I.F. STONE

# Fallen State

The wings of the Lavi melted, and like Icarus it fell into the sea. The cancellation of the catastrophically expensive Israeli-built superfighter, under strong pressure from the U.S. government, was the inevitable fate of a stupid dream that Israel could impose peace on its neighbors by military strength.

The political implications of the Lavi fiasco are of minor importance. Which politician, faction or party will profit from the affair, whether it will trigger early elections and kindred speculations are matters for pundits. The important thing is that it exposes to the world Israel's pitiful state of dependence and despair.

Before the Six Day War in 1967, Israel was a small country with a brisk rate of economic growth. Its sudden, decisive victory in that conflict left the country in a state of euphoria. Military spending mushroomed to a major item in the national budget, and the result was stalled economic growth. The nation's industrial and scientific communities concentrated on weapons making, which was deemed necessary to retain military supremacy and to generate export earnings. But for a small, politically isolated state like Israel, there is a limited market for weapons. The more powerful Israel became, the more dependent and vulnerable it was.

For all its armaments, Israel cannot even impose peace on a small, weak country like Lebanon. And it cannot even successfully occupy a small strip in south Lebanon, let alone the West Bank. The price Israel is paying today for its stubborn refusal to leave these territories is economic chaos and political instability, a prescription for a future coup d'état.

The United States was strongly opposed to the Lavi project because a superior, Israeli-made plane would have posed serious competition to the U.S. aerospace industry. Washington needs a militarily strong Israel but not an economically independent one. An economically independent Israel would eventually become politically independent, and thus no longer a reliable ally in the Middle East.

Short of an all-out nuclear war, both the Soviet Union and the United States depend on ever-more sophisticated conventional weapons to insure their national security. The Six Day War represented a victory for Israeli technology, but the new weapons that were proved in battle jeopardized the Warsaw Pact defense system. The Soviet Union was forced to develop new systems, which it shipped to its clients in the Middle East. As a result, in the October 1973 Yom Kippur War Israel found itself unprepared. Then in 1982, as the Pentagon watched, Gen. Ariel Sharon used new U.S.-made weapons to overpower the sophisticated Soviet missile batteries installed in Syria. Neither superpower is eager to abandon this testing laboratory in the Middle East, where well-trained armies try out new methods of killing.

About 20,000 young Israelis emigrate every year now. Agriculture and industry are reeling. A growing polarization between religious chauvinists and secular liberals is tearing the society apart. Israel needed the Lavi only if it needed to control the West Bank. And Israel does not need to control the West Bank. The question is, Will it use the economic breathing space provided by the Lavi's demise to make peace?

The immediate prospects of Israel's doing so are dim. There is no political power in Israel with the courage to negotiate with the Palestinians, without whose participation there can be no true peace. There is no other way. It is false to say that the Arab countries will not make peace with Israel. They will, if the occupied territories, including the Golan Heights, are returned.

The urgent need is to make peace—that is the lesson of the Lavi, but it is doubtful that Israel has learned it.

AMOS KENAN

*Amos Kenan is an Israeli novelist and a columnist for* Yediot Aharonot.

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# MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

An interesting thing failed to happen last August 18. After what seemed an interminable period of humiliation for U.S. policy toward the American hostages held in Beirut, and after a long period of misery inflicted upon those people's families and friends, one of the captives—Charles Glass of ABC TV—made a spectacular escape. And the absence of fanfare was deafening. There was no suggestion, as there has automatically been in the past, of an official welcome for this gallant fellow who had done what so many have dreamed of doing: worked free of his chains, eased past his captors, locked them in the stifling prison they had created for him, and thrown away the key. As Alexander Chancellor put it, writing for the new London daily *The Independent*:

> Here was a new American hero waiting to be made, and a much more wholesome hero, one would have thought, than the deluded and deceitful Oliver North who only the month before had been elevated by the media to this status. But something very strange happened. Instead of giving him the hero's welcome and White House reception by President Reagan accorded to all previous released hostages, the American government and media went out of their way to make Glass look at best foolish and at worst a somewhat sinister and undesirable character.

Chancellor did not understate the situation. Within hours of Glass's escape, the television screens were filled with members of that most degraded fraternity, the terrorism experts. Basing themselves, as is customary with their pseudo-discipline, on no evidence and no analysis, these specialists pronounced that Glass had not escaped at all. He had been "allowed" to escape, most probably as a result of intervention by the government of Syria. His freedom, in effect, did not count as anything but a triumph of "quiet diplomacy."

I should declare my interest and say that I have known Charlie Glass and his wife, Fiona, for many years. Without his reporting from the Middle East in the past decade, the pit of ignorance in which American perception of that region is sunk would be even more abysmal than it currently is. I went to see him very shortly after his escape, and heard of the ingenious way by which he had tricked his kidnappers into loosening his chain. Had any of the terrorism experts or government flacks contacted him for his side of the story before going public? No, they had not.

On the morning of his escape a State Department spokeswoman told those imbibing the daily press briefing that the Reagan Administration was most grateful to the Syrians for securing Mr. Glass's release. It is not every day that the United States has a kind word for Syria, so one journalist asked what it was that the Syrians had done. Well, said the spokeswoman, they had facilitated Mr. Glass's journey from Beirut to Damascus. Mr. Glass told me that he had wanted to fly straight from Beirut to London but that the Syrians, to whom he had taken himself as the local guardians of law and order, were adamant that he do them the honor of coming to their capital for his press conference. He was, he said, given no choice.

The only other comment made by the State Department was to the effect that Mr. Glass had been unwise to be in Lebanon in the first place and had made his trip in disregard of U.S. passport guidelines. It was not ruled out that some sort of action might be taken against him for this impertinence. What could possibly justify such unusual churlishness? Later that evening Dan Rather described Glass as "a young American who says he was a hostage," thus contriving to suggest that the whole story was a put-up job from the start. (While I was in Mr. Glass's house, Rather rang up to apologize for giving currency to this bit of disinformation, but no correction ever made the air.)

There are two explanations for this state-sponsored smear. The first is the need, felt very strongly in Washington, to conciliate the regime in Damascus. U.S. policy in the region is built on a series of panicky ad hoc commitments. The same Administration that has been the patron of Gen. Ariel Sharon and the Phalange is at present eager to do business with yesterday's "terrorist state." Diplomatic relations with Syria have only just been restored. It was, of all people, Gen. Vernon Walters who telephoned Ronald Reagan's thanks to President Assad for Syrian help in the "release."

The second explanation need not contradict the first. Glass is a reporter of considerable fiber, with some command of Arabic and excellent contacts in the region. He is not in the habit of euphemizing what he sees. During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Marines' later inglorious occupation of Beirut Airport, his dispatches shared none of the "Peace for Galilee" illusions that were official untruth at the time. While Reagan's bombs were falling in the center of the Libyan capital four years later, Glass was able to tell ABC's viewers, live, that they were falling on civilians. Supporters of the Administration's hard line could barely keep from gloating when Mr. Glass was kidnapped. The editors of *The New Republic*, a magazine that can scarcely be picked up these days without the aid of tongs and a surgical mask, jeered at his support for "the oppressed" and accused him of being "anti-Jewish." There were, no doubt, people in the government who silently approved this cowardly libel.

I save the best for the last. State Department investigators now concede that, though Syria worked hard for Glass's release, there is no evidence to disbelieve his own account. On the contrary, "well-placed sources" in Beirut have reported that his captors were surprised indeed to wake up and find him gone. This admission, given in background briefings and without attribution, has so far failed to make print.

In the aftermath of the Iran/*contra* scandal (if this is the aftermath) there is an assiduously repeated official line. That is that the President, old softy that he is, was driven off course by his own raging compassion for the hostages. As the Duke of Wellington once remarked, if you believe that, you will believe any damn thing. In the person of Charles Glass, so brilliantly reunited with his wife, children and friends, we have living refutation of this fatuous and contemptible falsehood.

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# Some Current Legal Defenses

EDWARD SOREL

THE "PINOCCHIO" DEFENSE
MICHAEL K. DEAVER, FORMER WHITE HOUSE AIDE WHO BECAME A LOBBYIST, FACES A FIVE-COUNT INDICTMENT CHARGING HIM WITH PERJURY BEFORE CONGRESS AND A FEDERAL GRAND JURY. MR. DEAVER CLAIMS THE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS HE WAS TAKING AT THE TIME IMPAIRED HIS MENTAL HEALTH AND COMPELLED HIM TO LIE.
THE "I DID IT FOR GOD" DEFENSE
DENNIS J. MALVASI, WHO BOMBED ABORTION CLINICS IN N.Y.C., EXPLAINED HE DID SO BECAUSE OF HIS STRONG RELIGIOUS BELIEFS. MR. MALVASI, A VIETNAM VET AND A DEVOUT CATHOLIC, SUPPORTED HIMSELF BY ARMED ROBBERY.
THE "UNTOUCHABLE" DEFENSE
ITALIAN AUTHORITIES CAN'T ARREST OR EVEN QUESTION ARCHBISHOP MARCINKUS AND TWO OTHER VATICAN BANK OFFICIALS ON THEIR LINKS TO ORGANIZED CRIME AND THEIR ROLE IN THE NATIONWIDE BANKING SCANDAL AS LONG AS THEY HIDE OUT BEHIND VATICAN WALLS.
(WHICH, THANKS TO MUSSOLINI'S PACT WITH PIUS XI, THEY CAN DO INDEFINITELY.)
Edward Sorel

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# ARTICLES.

MEESE'S MONOPOLY GAME

# Pulling the Plug On Antitrust Law

JERRY S. COHEN AND
JONATHAN W. CUNEO

The nomination of Robert Bork to be a Justice of the Supreme Court is the latest step by the Administration to reinforce its policy of not enforcing the antitrust laws. Bork is, of course, the author of *The Antitrust Paradox*, a book that presaged Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d's distaste for antitrust actions. Another recent Administration move was the appointment of Charles Rule to be Assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department's antitrust division.

Bork and Rule are graduates of the University of Chicago and members of the "Chicago school," a small band of economic zealots who argue that promoting corporate efficiency should be the sole aim of antitrust policy. The Chicago school sees antitrust law not as rules governing and promoting a fair and competitive economy but as an evil form of Federal regulation. Accordingly, the school's advocates see enforcement of the antitrust laws not as a task for lawyers but primarily as an intellectual exercise for its own brand of economist.

The Chicago school also provides the economic rationale for the existence and behavior of the same powerful corporations whose power the Sherman Antitrust Act and other measures were designed to check. Although there is no reason to believe that Meese even vaguely understands the complicated Chicago school theories of Bork and Rule, he instinctively believes that big business should not be the subject of government concern, even if Federal statutes hold to the contrary. Bork's contempt for antitrust is well known; Rule's views, less so.

As chief of the antitrust division, Rule is the appointee to whom the President has delegated his constitutional authority to "take care that the [antitrust] laws be faithfully executed." The constitutional responsibilities of the job are those of an enforcer, a guardian, a caretaker.

Earlier this year, Rule appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee (which later approved his appointment) in his role as Acting Assistant Attorney General and asked Congress to cut his staff by 15 percent next fiscal year. The Senators thus faced what has become a familiar dilemma in the Reagan years: Should it approve a nominee to a position of high public trust who will act less like a caretaker than an undertaker? In Rule, Meese chose an undertaker.

It is supreme irony that the Meese Justice Department would adopt anything other than a tough antitrust policy. When it comes to crime—and many antitrust violations are felonies—Meese is a law-and-order man. When it comes to legal interpretation, Meese believes in looking to the original intent of the law. Also, Republican philosophy is to protect free and open markets, one of the prime purposes of the antitrust laws.

Yet, under Meese, the antitrust division has failed to enforce entire portions of the laws against monopoly and restraint of trade and has demonstrated unprecedented leniency to corporate giants. More important for the long term, the Justice Department has worked to weaken the laws themselves, thereby attempting to insure that the lax policy will continue under Meese's successors. The appointment of Rule is notice to Congress that Meese will continue his attitude of contempt for law enforcement where the antitrust laws are involved.

Our nation has a long antimonopoly tradition. The American colonists were extremely resentful of British trading monopolies back home and the mercantilist policies that promoted them. The Boston Tea Party was, in part, an antimonopoly demonstration. Around that time, Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations*, the classic attack on mercantilism, which exposed how merchant interests could subvert state power. Thomas Jefferson, the most prominent proponent of dispersion of political power, protested the Constitution's failure to prohibit monopolies.

Congress passed the Sherman Antitrust Act—the basic law prohibiting monopolies and cartels—in 1890 as a response to the rapid growth of trusts after the industrial revolution. The trusts possessed immense political and social power, as well as vast economic power. According to Henry Adams in 1870: "The belief is common in America that the day is at hand when corporations far greater than [the] Erie Railroad . . . will ultimately succeed in directing government itself." Clarence Darrow sardonically noted that the Pennsylvania Legislature could not adjourn until the Pennsylvania Railroad had concluded its business.

Just as Magna Carta restrained the power of the king and the Constitution restrained the power of the government through laws, the Sherman Antitrust Act restrained naked corporate power through law. In the words of the Supreme Court, the law was "a comprehensive charter of economic liberty" whose purpose was in part to provide "an environment conducive to the preservation of our democratic political and social institutions." The act sought to promote free, open and fair competition and to prevent corporate domination of our lives, business opportunities and government. It provided libertarian benefits as well as economic ones.

Traditional Republican philosophy has been that governmental power should be used to prohibit private restraints.

*Jerry S. Cohen practices law in Washington, D.C. He is the co-author of* America, Inc. *(Dial Press) and* Power, Inc. *(Viking). Jonathan W. Cuneo also practices law in Washington. He is the general counsel of the Committee to Support the Antitrust Laws.*

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Thus antitrust was a bipartisan project and, in the main, Republicans and Democrats followed the Sherman Antitrust Act's original intent and took a "law-and-order" approach. When Teddy Roosevelt's Justice Department sued J.P. Morgan's Northern Securities Company for antitrust violations, Morgan immediately went to Washington to meet with T.R. and Attorney General Philander Chase Knox to object to the lack of advance notice.

"If we have done anything wrong, send your man to my man [Morgan's lawyer] and they can fix it up," Morgan remonstrated.

"That can't be done," Roosevelt said.

"We don't want to fix it up, we want to stop it," Knox chimed in.

Roosevelt and Knox were not the last Republican trustbusters. More recently, Nixon Attorneys General John Mitchell and William Saxbe delivered fire and brimstone speeches on the need for antitrust enforcement. Ford's Attorney General, Edward Levi, and his Supreme Court appointment, John Paul Stevens, are both antitrust experts whose views are consistent with the Republican mainstream. The Nixon and Ford Administrations both energetically prosecuted the case against I.B.M.; the Ford Administration brought the case against A.T.&T. Vigorous antitrust enforcement was a plank of the 1976 Republican platform.

Meese's most significant contribution to the history of antitrust is that he is seeking to kill the enforcement mechanisms themselves. The Administration's legislative package in this area would radically alter the standards for judging mergers. It would also pull the teeth from private enforcement by cutting back on damage awards. If enacted, these reforms would make it much more difficult for Justice Departments of the future to bring "structural" cases, which cover entire industries to prevent monopolies and oligopolies, and for victims to have their day in court. So far, Congress has balked at passing such reforms.

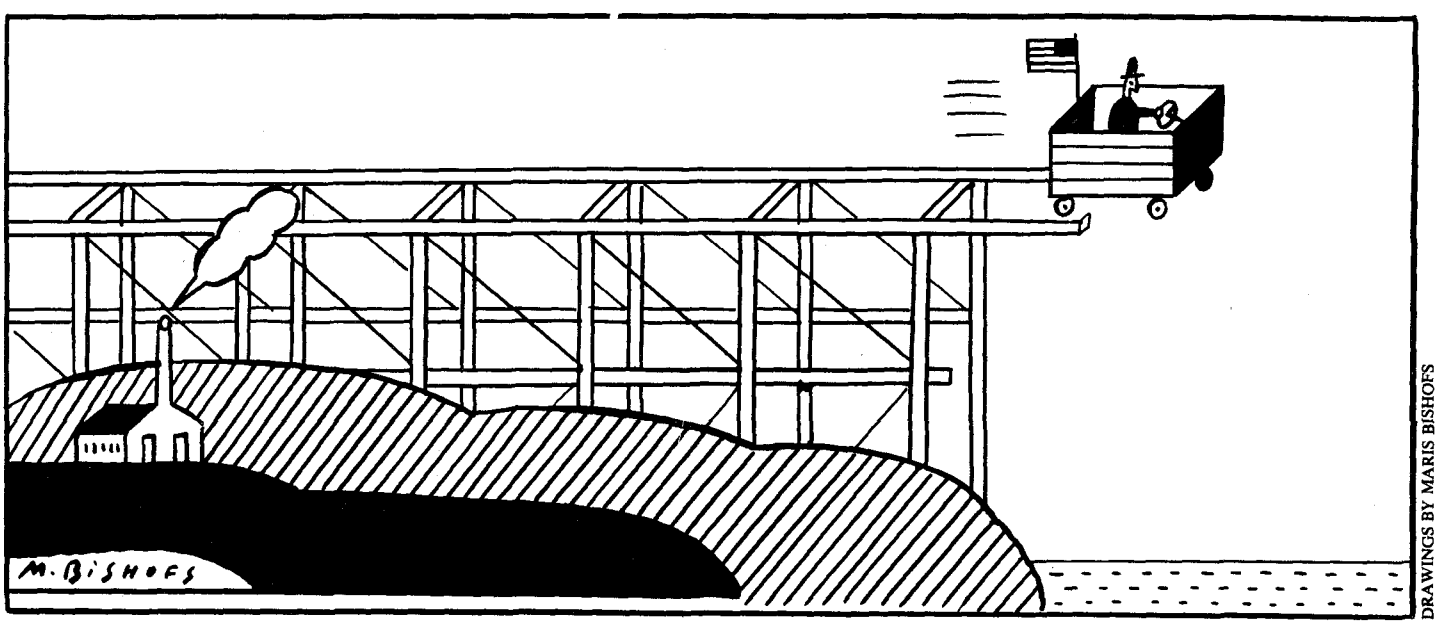
The antitrust division's 1988 budget, unveiled earlier this year, shows the Justice Department's real intent. Other divisions, including civil rights, faced only modest reductions or had increases. The antitrust division faces, in a single year, a reduction of approximately 15 percent of its staff, about 100 employees. Donald Baker, Ford's antitrust chief, has testified that the budget is a "disaster." In Baker's words, "Money talks. So does the absence of money." The proposed cut directly affects the future quality of the antitrust division's staff. The government must depend on its career staff for the experience and expertise necessary to do battle with the corporate giants.

The policeman who turns his back is telling the criminal he does not care. In his precinct, crime will rise. The Meese antitrust division has not only turned its back, it is trying to handcuff the next shift as well. The effects are not surprising. In the words of one Wall Street economist, when the Administration "passed the word that it was disinclined to invoke the antitrust statutes. . . . the Boesky bombshell was inevitable." Wasted resources, wealth transfers from the average citizen to the privileged, and upheavals of entire communities are but a few of the ill effects of the takeover wave of unprecedented proportions that the country is experiencing.

The full effect is worse. Disarming the antitrust authorities while allowing corporate dinosaurs to hunt and plunder freely in America's heartland critically affects every one of us. As Walter Adams and James W. Brock have pointed out in their vital new book, *The Bigness Complex*, planning by private power groups determines the "kind of society in which we shall live." They argue persuasively that we are witnessing a return to mercantilism in which the big interests will capture the government.

The great irony is that the leap backward to mercantilism is led by an Attorney General with an Adam Smith necktie. And, in the background, the Chicago school theologians, personified by Bork and Rule, are delighted at the sight of an Attorney General following their siren call without the slightest concern for the tragic consequences of his inaction.

If Meese has his way, an antitrust division chief in the 1990s will be only a pathologist of the emaciated remains of antitrust enforcement. It's hard to believe that a small band of Chicago school economists could be the cause of it all. □

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CHARISMA AND *CONCIENCIA*

# Castro Takes the Economy in Hand

MARIFELI PEREZ-STABLE

In August 1984 Silvia Marjorie Spence, a 42-year-old Jamaican-born woman who has lived in Santiago de Cuba since 1955, was fired from her job as chief accountant of a Santiago cement plant. Management charged that she had "acted on her own, mistrusted her superiors and voiced unsubstantiated gossip."

For two years, Spence had persistently questioned bookkeeping and payroll irregularities. Workers were being paid three times the national average wage; bonuses were being awarded without corresponding increases in productivity; and cement was being illegally bartered to a nearby agricultural enterprise for meat and vegetables.

Spence appealed her dismissal both to the Ministry of Construction and the Cuban Communist Party. The ministry's response was slow and unsympathetic, and in the end the Minister himself confirmed the firing. Local party officials were more receptive, but her case hit a dead end when it reached the provincial party committee, whose secretary in charge of construction-industry issues was a personal friend of the cement plant's director. Undaunted, Spence appealed to the party's national review board. In February 1985 it concluded that her dismissal was unwarranted and ordered her reinstatement and an audit of the plant. But twenty-one months passed before the board's directives were implemented. In November 1986 Spence was reinstated in her old job and awarded more than 7,000 pesos in back pay. That December 25 and 26, the official party newspaper, *Granma*, published a two-part exposé of Silvia Marjorie Spence's ordeal.

That outcome was in no small way attributable to a speech that Fidel Castro had delivered on April 19, 1986—the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Bay of Pigs—in which he lambasted corruption, negligence and profiteering. New mercenaries, Castro charged, were now threatening the revolution from within. Managers were looking out for the well-being of their own industries without considering the national interest; artists were selling their works to the state at exorbitant prices; and peasants were making hefty profits on the free market. A 1985 housing law allowing direct transactions between buyer and seller was abetting runaway speculation. The informal economy was buzzing with street vendors and jacks-of-all-trades. The revolution, Castro reminded his audience, was not about making a quick peso. "We do not want to launch a cultural revolution," he declared. "We do not want to solve our problems by extremist methods and hurl the masses against those responsible for these irritating deeds."

The modest private sector that had flourished since the 1970s had become intolerable. Some Cubans were pursuing their individual enrichment and the private economy was draining the state sector of increasingly scarce resources. Meanwhile, Cuba's open economy remained as vulnerable as ever. Its annual export earnings had in the recent past provided sufficient hard currency for imports of between $1.2 billion and $1.5 billion, but in 1986 those had been reduced to some $600 million. Today, real sugar prices on the world market have fallen to 1930s levels, and the value of petroleum exports (domestic savings from the crude oil that the Soviet Union supplies to Cuba) has declined by half. While the Cuban-Soviet relationship is stable, Soviet sugar price subsidies and oil supplies beyond the island's domestic needs are reportedly being reduced.

The U.S. embargo, tightened by the Reagan Administration, continues to impose a heavy burden on the Cuban economy. Since, for example, the U.S. market remains out of bounds for Cuba, the devaluation of the dollar has increased import costs from other Western suppliers. Were there no embargo, Cuba could purchase cheaper U.S. goods. Western banks are much less willing to make loans, and Cuba still has to reschedule payments on a substantial part of its $4 billion foreign debt. The United States, moreover, has pressured the island's Western creditors to exact considerably harsher repayment terms than those imposed on other Third World countries. Natural disasters—a hurricane in late 1985 and a severe drought throughout 1986—have taken their toll on agricultural output. All told, both ideological considerations and harsh economic realities are spurring a re-examination of the modest economic reforms of the past ten years.

During the 1960s the revolution sought to make its special mark on history by attempting the parallel construction of socialism and communism. If Cuba was to promote social justice, then the logic of the market had to be challenged. If Cuba was to harness mass enthusiasm and channel it into economic development, then a more responsive political system was needed. Or so the Cuban leadership reasoned as it contemplated the face of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

By 1970 Cuba had eliminated nearly all private-sector activity. Accounting and planning controls over economic activity had been virtually discarded. High investment rates and poor economic performance had drastically curtailed consumption. And worker absenteeism soared as bare store shelves rendered money worthless. Moreover, a political system that depended on Castro's stature and prestige, and on popular élan and commitment, wore thin amid mounting austerity. The combination of highly centralized economic planning, moral incentives and charismatic leadership ground to a halt with the failure to achieve the goal of a 10-million-ton sugar harvest in 1970.

*Marifeli Perez-Stable teaches at the State University of New York, Old Westbury, and is a frequent visitor to Cuba.*

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In the 1970s Cuba embarked on the institutionalization of its revolution. In 1976 the economy acquired a blueprint for the first time, with the introduction of a management and planning system of relative decentralization and material incentives. At the same time, the Communist Party expanded its membership, mass organizations were strengthened, a socialist Constitution was promulgated and the institutions known as Popular Power were set in place, allowing a semblance of supervision over government facilities such as schools, supermarkets, cultural and sports centers, especially at the local level. Trade unions and the Federation of Cuban Women became active, albeit within the confines of vanguard party leadership. At least in principle, most Cubans had a set of rules to govern their daily lives at work and in their neighborhoods.

The management and planning system did not work miracles, but it did introduce a modicum of rationality into the economy, which began to register modest, if irregular, growth rates. The standard of living improved noticeably and daily life for the average Cuban became easier. Wages were linked to performance and the "parallel market" offered a greater variety of goods at higher prices than state stores did, as an incentive to productivity. The free market spurred peasants to increase their output and offered consumers fruit and vegetables, which had disappeared from the state market long ago. The government enacted wage and price reforms and allowed free contracting to encourage a more rational use of labor. Voluntary work was reduced. The 1960s were indeed receding.

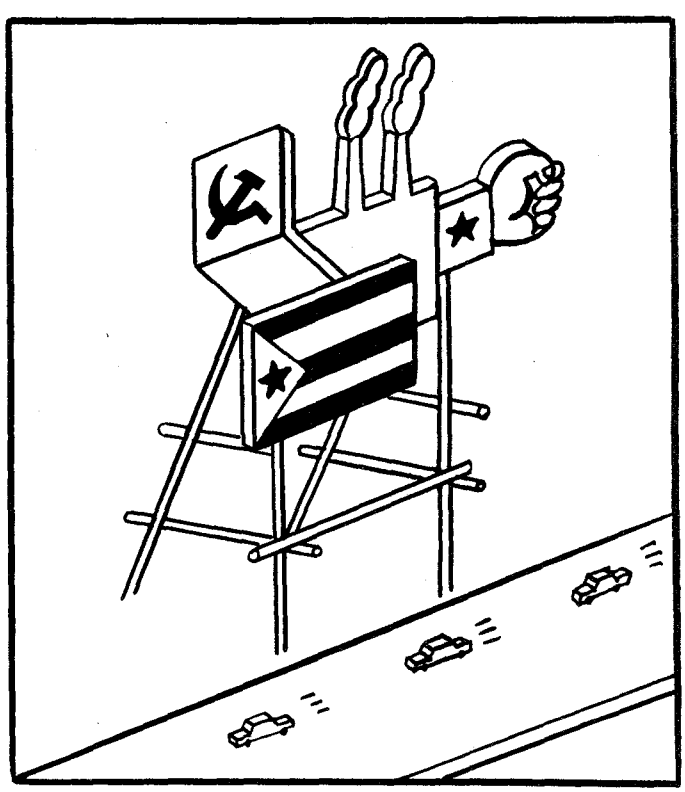
Yet, Cuba's efforts to decentralize and streamline its economy did not proceed smoothly. A trade-dependent economy facing a U.S. embargo could not guarantee the flow of much-needed hard currency. Decentralization was in part hindered by the irregular supply of raw materials needed to give enterprises greater autonomy over planning and production. Faced with the need to show a profit, many of them resorted to inflating prices. Even so, state subsidies rose substantially in 1985. Scarcity of resources and supply bottlenecks encouraged an ad hoc barter system among firms.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the central bureaucracy resisted the effort to loosen planning controls. The government never created a local development fund that could reinvest industry profits, for example, and the allocation of investment capital remained haphazard. Most important of all, perhaps, the top party leadership—particularly Castro—was ambivalent about the new planning system, which was introduced only in the aftermath of the 1970 sugar harvest fiasco. For Castro, socialism was not reducible to the smooth functioning of economic control mechanisms. Mass enthusiasm and *conciencia* ("social consciousness"), rather, were the forces behind Cuba's struggle for national independence and social justice, and Castro was their anchor. Though Castro nominally endorsed the reforms at the first two Communist Party congresses, in 1975 and 1980, he stopped short of giving them his personal political imprimatur. By the time the 1986 congress came around, Castro had taken the reins of the economy firmly back into his own hands.

In late 1984 the state Central Planning Board, JUCEPLAN, was partially divested of its powers in favor of a more broadly based Central Group, which includes government ministers and vice ministers, central committee department heads, leaders of the mass organizations and Popular Power representatives. The new body aims to institute truly global economic planning and is more directly under Castro's personal direction than was its predecessor. In December 1986, at its closing session, the party congress ratified a "strategic counteroffensive to rectify mistakes and negative tendencies," something Castro had repeatedly called for during the course of the year.

Underlying the counteroffensive is the old 1960s Cuban vision that socialism without *conciencia* is no better than capitalism. The party abolished or restricted all the extraordinary sources of income that had been tolerated since the 1970s—peasant markets, freelance work, market regulation of housing costs—in the belief that the self-interested quest for material rewards was undermining the resolve that had sustained the revolution and was allowing the successful few to breach its commitment to equality. "A communist spirit and *conciencia*, a revolutionary will and vocation were, are and always will be a thousand times more powerful than money!" Castro recently proclaimed.

To meet its current economic predicament, Cuba adopted a domestic austerity program last December that includes increases in public transportation fares, consumer utility costs and select parallel market prices, as well as cutbacks in the number of state-assigned automobiles, per diem payments to government officials, and foreign travel budgets. Together with the retrenchment of the private sector,



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The "strategic counteroffensive" is an attempt to infuse this belt-tightening with cherished revolutionary values of national purpose and self-sacrifice. The Cuban leadership has shown itself unwilling to risk a full-fledged market socialism like Hungary's, refusing to accept the proposition that the inner logic of socialism lies in a new "invisible hand" or to resign itself to widening social inequality. It has reaffirmed its view that the island's economy, historically deformed and currently embargoed, cannot implement a socialist version of the law of supply and demand without intolerable social costs. It has once again staked a claim to its own road to socialism. Since 1959, the Cuban leadership has preferred to believe that politics—not economic mechanisms—lie at the heart of socialism, and the current counteroffensive, with its reliance on charismatic authority, is a reassertion of that belief.

The 1980s, however, are not the 1960s. Although under evaluation, the planning and management system remains in place and Castro has warned that the "idealistic mistakes" of the past must not be repeated. However weak and constrained, there is an institutional order in Cuba today, and strengthening party authority over the state, especially at the local level, is a key element of the effort to "rectify mistakes and negative tendencies." The institutional order introduced in the 1970s has not so far been challenged. The government is encouraging a more critical, less controlled press and urging Cubans—like Silvia Marjorie Spence—to voice their concerns and keep management under close scrutiny. The 1986 party congress underscored the need for women, blacks and young people to be promoted to leadership positions in Cuban society. Present policies are indeed contradictory, as old visions are resurrected under new conditions.

Cuba's challenge, however, lies beyond the strategic counteroffensive. However evocative the 1960s may be of revolutionary sacrifice and moral exaltation, the generation of the 1980s may prove resistant to that appeal. About one of every two Cubans on the island was born after 1959; more than 1 million Cubans live in the United States. No other socialist country has a history and a culture so intimately marked by the United States, and despite the present freeze of relations, a rapprochement cannot be ruled out forever. The revolution is nearing its thirtieth anniversary, and Castro is 61 years old. The present counteroffensive would be inconceivable without him, but by and large it is not providing any clues about how Cuba should be governed after he is gone from the scene.

Cubans may well respond to the moral exhortations of the present moment—for a time. But the exigencies of everyday life may in the end prove too compelling. Winds of change are blowing everywhere in the socialist world, and Mikhail Gorbachev's view that the United States is "worried about one thing: If democracy develops here . . . we will win" strikes a long-neglected chord in socialism. Younger generations of Cubans may conclude that Cuban socialism, without reneging on its own special legacy, should heed the calls for change that are now stirring the entire socialist world. ☐

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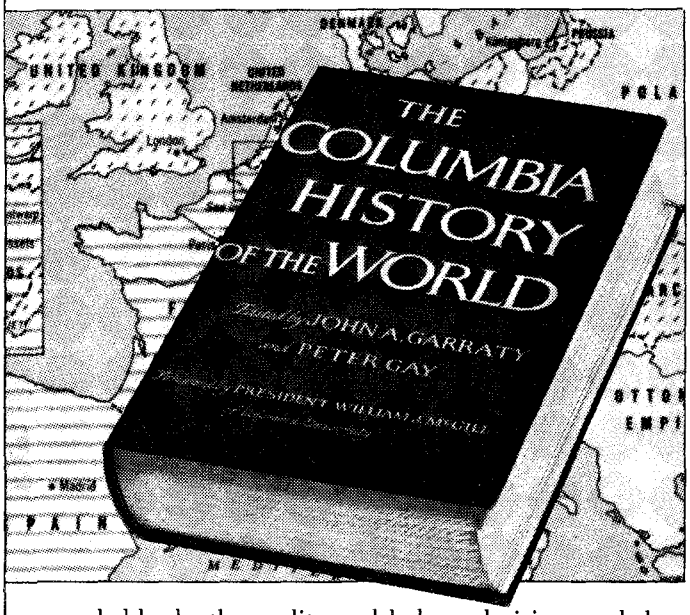


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THE CUTTING EDGE

# Ecofeminism—A New Perspective

KIRKPATRICK SALE

It has taken a long time to work itself through, but two of the most potent and durable ideas of the 1960s—feminism and ecological politics—have begun to come together in a new and fruitful way at last. The resulting hybrid, "ecofeminism," has finally taken on a distinct life of its own and appears to be influencing a growing number of groups and movements across the continent.

The ramifications of ecofeminism are quite profound, I believe, in both philosophical and practical ways, but its basic theses are not complicated. Put simply:

§ The patriarchal societies now familiar to us developed only in the past 5,000 years or so, succeeding a long series of relatively benign, gynecocentric and often goddess-worshiping societies of the late Paleolithic and early Neolithic eras.

§ Unlike those earlier cultures, patriarchies were (and, alas, are) based in large part on the domination and manipulation of nature and women—to some degree, in fact, on a hatred of both—who were seen as existing to serve a hierarchical, male-organized system.

§ Indeed, by identifying women with nature (e.g., Mother Nature), patriarchies have sought to justify their mastery (the word is apt) over both through the concept of a superior and advancing "civilization."

§ Similarly, by objectifying women and nature, patriarchies can treat them as "the other," something apart, and thus manipulate, use and even despoil them in the name of patriarchy and civilization.

§ Those patriarchal forms of oppression are now widely understood to be highly dangerous and insupportable, indeed life-threatening; they must be replaced, and quickly, with new attitudes and practices toward nature and women, without hierarchy, domination, exploitation and oppression.

This ecofeminist perspective, as it is now being fleshed out and developed, is obviously confrontational and controversial, but for many it is exciting and energizing as well. It creates a synergistic mixture of two important contemporary schools of thought and offers a whole new direction in which at least some parts of the ecological and feminist movements can proceed. But more, it offers a way in which those two movements can work together, in harmony and with mutually reinforcing power.

For feminists, ecofeminism has provided the intellectual substructure of a fairly well-developed philosophy of nature to accompany their recently buttressed analyses of gender and sexual roles. And it has given a larger and more useful philosophical perspective to many women who felt they had come to a dead end in the traditional feminist movement—as, for example, many "liberal" feminists originally concerned only with equal rights or career opportunities have found ecofeminism useful in showing the shortfalls of "piece of the action-ism" and the traps of, in the words of ecofeminist and leading feminist theoretician Ynestra King, "capitulation to a culture . . . both misogynist and anti-ecological." This has been particularly true for women in the environmental and Green movements who, after their experience of trying to work within the system, have come to understand that the problems are of culture and values more than politics and laws, and have gained a new insight through ecofeminism into the nature of the system and its substructures of dominance.

For ecologists, ecofeminism has provided a way to make connections with the political and social worlds that they otherwise have tended to ignore, and thus it insures a human side to their often abstract analyses. And by showing them the dark, underlying cultural causes of environmental destruction, ecofeminism has provided a very clear understanding of the kinds of real-world changes that have to be made before there can be any kind of ecological sanity.

There is one further bonus of this amalgam: Ecofeminism can, if allowed to, establish the sort of direct political link between men and women that has been unavailable in many recent social movements and at least problematic in the traditional feminist movement. It is true that ecofeminism has so far been claimed and nurtured mostly by women, and there are some who regard it as a special province of feminism where men are, by the very nature of things, not welcome. But in fact the ecofeminist analysis does not demand any kind of gender identification, and in a rather special way it welcomes a combination of that "scientific" thought so often the province of men and the intuitive experience of subjugation and exploitation known to women. In the words of Judith Plant, an ecofeminist from British Columbia, "The coming together of the two gives us hope for an understanding of the world that has the potential to be rooted in 'thinking feelingly.'" Plant adds:

> Eco-feminism gives women and men common ground. While women may have been associated with nature, this does not mean that somehow they have been socialized in a different world from men. Women have learned to think in the same dualities as men have and we feel just as alienated as do our brothers. The social system isn't good for either—or both—of us. Yet, we *are* the social system. We need some common ground from which to be critically self-conscious, to enable us to recognize and affect the deep structure of our relations, with each other and with our environment. [Emphasis added.]

And if it can really do that, it will have done a lot.

It seems to me too early to speak of ecofeminism as a "movement," although its intellectual product—books, scholarly papers, articles—is already substantial and the energy it has lately generated is promising. Its roots go back only a decade or so (the word seems to have been coined by French scholar Françoise d'Eaubonne in a 1974 book *La*

*This article, part of a continuing series on new trends and ideas in nontraditional politics, has drawn on the reporting and research of Carol Moore in Los Angeles.*

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*Feminisme ou la Mort*) and it did not make much of a public impact until a conference in 1980 called "Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the 1980s," coordinated by Ynestra King. The earliest influential works appeared in the late 1970s (Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature* and Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* in 1978, Elizabeth Dodson Gray's *Green Paradise Lost* in 1979) and have been followed by an outpouring in the 1980s, as activists and scholars alike have taken up the issues. Among the most important are: Carolyn Merchant's *Death of Nature* in 1983, a special issue of the quarterly *Heresies* devoted to feminism and ecology in 1981, Charlene Spretnak's *Politics of Woman's Spirituality* in 1982, plus contributions by King, Margot Adler, Nancy Jack Todd, Riane Eisler, Starhawk, Leonie Caldecott and others.

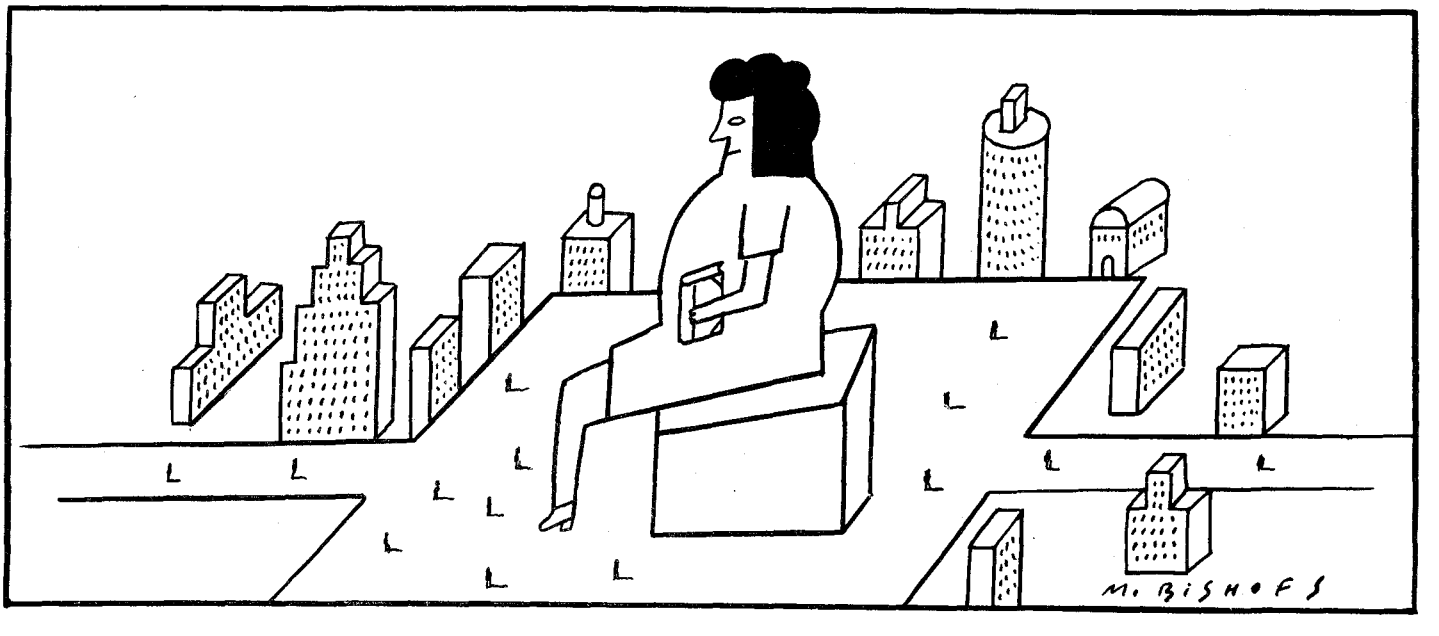
Also, over the past four or five years a few small groups of ecofeminists have formed in various parts of the country, particularly on the West Coast. A number of groups founded for other purposes—notably Feminists for Animal Rights, Women of All Red Nations and WomanEarth Feminist Peace Institute—have been infused with ecofeminist perspectives. Several demonstrations led by women, most particularly the Women's Pentagon Actions in 1980 and 1981, have had a clear ecofeminist character. And just this spring the University of Southern California sponsored a weekend conference on "Ecofeminist Perspectives," which was the most successful, diverse and scholarly one to date and which may have marked a new point in the development of ecofeminism.

At least part of that success was due to the broad, overarching nature of ecofeminism itself and its ability, at least for a time, to reconcile the traditional socialist-versus-radical split in the feminist left. For many former socialist feminists who have come to feel that an analysis based on class and materialism alone is not enough, for example, there is a particular attraction to the wider vision of ecofeminism that draws in gender domination and its connections to nature domination. As philosopher Karen Warren has said, to the socialist feminist's traditional concern with "the structural interconnections between sexism, racism and classism," ecofeminism "contributes insights about the important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature." Similarly, many who were once in the radical wing of feminism, with its emphasis on the insights of spiritual consciousness, have recently found in ecofeminism's "goddess cultures" a whole new political context. In her address to the California conference, Spretnak said that women "experienced the exhilarating discovery through historic and archeological sources of a religion that honored the female—imagine our surprise—and seemed to have as its good book nature itself."

Not that there was any attempt at unanimity or consensus at the conference. Differences often surfaced; some materialist-oriented participants looked with skepticism on the spiritually inclined (and no doubt vice versa). And on specific issues such as pornography and population control, there seemed to be a wide range of ecofeminist approaches. Even the diversity of interests was quite extraordinary, to judge by the speeches and workshops: Ecofeminism and Nonviolent Direct Action; The Cosmology of the Goddess; Ecofeminist Genetic Engineering: A Contradiction in Terms; Reproductive Technologies and the Population Question; Transforming Relations of Domination: Racism, Sexism and the Land; Men and Ecofeminism.

Nevertheless, there did seem to be certain recurrent themes running through the weekend that might be said to represent the hallmarks of present ecofeminist thought:

*Goddess cultures.* For a variety of reasons—including the recent publication of Riane Eisler's *The Chalice and the Blade*—there is a growing interest in the so-called goddess cultures of the Paleolithic and early Neolithic eras. Current historical and anthropological research, featured at several workshops, suggests that in those periods, and over much of the occupied globe, the predominant cultures were ones that lived in considerable ecological balance, with a notable absence of hierarchy, male dominance and war, and with systems of belief focused on female deities or figures

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representing the Earth Mother or her natural features. It is to those cultures, where there was dominance neither of nature nor of women, that the ecofeminism of today can logically look for its antecedents and models.

*Earth-based spirituality.* Though resisted by a few, the idea of some kind of spiritual coloration to the ecofeminist palette did seem to resonate for many. In her address, Spretnak, author of the recently published *The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics*, was explicit on this point, pointing out the path to ecofeminism that comes from "our deepest feeling of a spirituality infused with ecological wisdom and wholeness," and adding, "We must cultivate our spiritual impulses." Several women spoke too of the way American Indian societies traditionally related to nature on not a material but a spiritual plane, and urged the emulation of those tribes, which saw, as one ecofeminist put it, "no separation of the natural and the spiritual."

*Bioregionalism.* A significant minority of the people involved had at least some acquaintance with the bioregional movement, and one of the more popular workshops dealt with its implications. For Judith Plant, one of the workshop leaders, there is a direct connection between bioregionalism's sense of place and ecofeminism's need for a political expression. "Bioregionalism," she said, "with its emphasis on distinct regional cultures and identities strongly attached to their natural environments, may well be the kind of framework within which the philosophy of ecofeminism could realize its full potential as part of a practical social movement."

*Deep ecology.* This concept is essentially a way of critiquing liberal and reformist environmentalism by putting all relations with nature up to the test of whether they are anthropocentric and designed for human use and benefit, the usual liberal view, or biocentric and designed to accommodate the human in the totality of other fauna and flora. Although some ecofeminists in the past have accused deep ecologists of being insufficiently concerned with the machinery of patriarchy, the impressive philosophical tenets that have been established by deep ecology in recent years have won it a growing following, feminists included, and another major panel was devoted to connecting its similarities to feminism in the ways that both "run counter to traditional Western, patriarchal moral theory."

Ultimately, it seems to me, ecofeminism is best thought of less as a movement than a philosophy—or perhaps not a movement at all, in the traditional sense, nor even some kind of "tendency" within a movement but rather a way of re-regarding the world that can be brought to bear on a whole variety of movements and tendencies. The ideas that are swirling around in the eddies of ecofeminism's creation can probably serve a great many people other than its adherents as a means to reassess their experience and regard the natural and human worlds anew.

Irene Diamond says that there are plans afoot to build on the success of the Ecofeminist Perspectives conference by establishing a network of ecofeminists. There is talk too of a newsletter or possibly a full-fledged magazine devoted to

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ecofeminist issues. If it does maintain its momentum—and I see every reason to expect that it will—I think we will see the ecofeminist perspective in a wide variety of places, filtering a wide variety of political and social concerns, over the next few years. Diamond put it this way to her colleagues:

"We have so many hard jobs ahead of us, so much education, so much organizing, so much action. But we do have that other way of understanding—a revolutionary understanding which we call feminist and ecological in which we share the world with all creatures and all living things and know that their stories are our own." □

# Boorstin

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

did so, according to Ellen Schrecker's authoritative study *No Ivory Tower.*) Boorstin agreed with the committee that Communists should not be allowed to teach, and he assured committee members that their inquiry did not threaten academic freedom. His collaboration reinforced the committee's assumptions and helped justify its persecutions.

The committee asked Boorstin how he expressed his opposition to Communism. "My opposition has taken two forms," he replied. "First, the form of an affirmative participation in religious activities, because I think religion is a bulwark against Communism. This has been expressed in my activities in the Hillel Foundation at the University of Chicago," he said. "The second form of my opposition has been an attempt to discover and explain to students, in my teaching and in my writing, the unique virtues of American democracy. I have done this partly in my Jefferson book, which, by the way, was bitterly attacked in the *Daily Worker* as something defending the ruling class in America, and in a forthcoming book called *The Genius of American Politics*. I have written articles and book reviews for *Commentary* magazine, which is a strongly anti-Communist, journal."

*The Genius of American Politics* dealt with the broad sweep of political ideas across the three centuries of American history. The "genius" of American politics consisted of the absence of all ideology and doctrine. Boorstin made it clear in the book that anti-Communism was one of the ideologies that was alien to American political culture. He criticized cold war foreign policy, writing that the concept of "saving" nations and peoples by gaining their adherence to ideas was fundamentally totalitarian. And Boorstin strongly objected to McCarthyism.

*Genius* contains one striking anticipation of Boorstin's HUAC experience. In the "Suggestions for Further Reading" at the end of the book, Boorstin recommends Whittaker Chambers's memoir of his own HUAC experience, *Witness*. Chambers's picture of the man who names names is devastating:

> The ex-Communist informer. . . . sits in security and uses his special knowledge to destroy others. He has that special information to give because he knows those others' faces, voices, and lives, because he once lived within their confidence, in a shared faith, trusted by them as one of themselves, accepting their friendship, feeling their pleasures and griefs, sitting in their houses, eating at their tables, accepting their kindness, knowing their wives and children. . . . By the logic of his position in the struggles of this age, every ex-Communist is an informer from the moment he breaks with Communism, regardless of how long it takes him to reach the police station.

When Boorstin recommended that Chambers be read, he had not yet been subpoenaed by HUAC, but he must have had some idea that sooner or later he would be on his way to the "police station"—in his case, the caucus room of the old House office building on Capitol Hill, where HUAC held the hearing in which Boorstin turned informer.

None of the reviewers of *Genius*—including those in liberal journals—mentioned that Boorstin had testified before HUAC as a friendly witness. Subsequent writers about *The Genius of American Politics* have maintained that silence.

Boorstin's 1961 book, *The Image, or What Happened to the American Dream*, his best, gained deserved fame for introducing the concept of the "pseudo-event": "It is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planned, planted or incited it. . . . It is planted primarily . . . for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced. . . . Its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous. . . . Usually it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy." The concept, as Victor Navasky pointed out in *Naming Names*, applies perfectly to the HUAC hearings. Although neither Boorstin nor his colleagues were writing about his HUAC appearance, it seems to have influenced his best work.

The rise of the New Left was the next crisis in Daniel Boorstin's life as a political thinker. At the University of Chicago, Boorstin's support for the war in Vietnam brought him into conflict with campus radicals. Boorstin's junior colleague in the history department, Assistant Professor Jesse Lemisch, used Boorstin's HUAC testimony in classes to illustrate the relationship between historical scholarship and political commitment. In 1966, Lemisch was fired; department chair William H. McNeill told him, "Your convictions interfered with your scholarship." Lemisch responded in public forums by pointing out that Boorstin had told HUAC that his scholarship served HUAC's political ends; why was it illegitimate for Lemisch's scholarship to serve different ones? Students for a Democratic Society members at the university distributed a leaflet in Boorstin's class quoting from his HUAC testimony and making Lemisch's point. That leaflet was then published in the journal *Radical America.*

Boorstin lashed back at the New Left, accusing its adherents of vandalism, violence and mindless activism—although in this case the connections they were making were hardly mindless. Boorstin's response to his student critics

*Jon Wiener, a contributing editor to* The Nation, *is professor of history at the University of California, Irvine.*

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appeared in an article in *Esquire* in 1968, "The New Barbarians," where he wrote for the first and only time in his career about his experience in the Communist Party. The article contrasted the old left, which he praised for being truly radical, with the new. The Communists of the 1930s and 1940s, he wrote, "favored a reconstruction of American life. . . . They had a great deal to do with promoting a new and wider American labor movement, with helping FDR popularize the need for a welfare state, and with persuading Americans to join the war to stop Hitler"; they "did awaken and sensitize the American conscience. . . . That was radicalism." He wrote as one of "those of us who were part of it." One issue, as always, was avoided: In view of his comrades' achievements, why did Boorstin inform on them?

Boorstin was asking the New Left to do what his generation had done: engage in a "search for meaning," develop an ideology with "specific content," pose fundamental questions regarding community and society. But, as historian John Patrick Diggins later pointed out, in all of Boorstin's previous work he had argued that the development of explicit political ideas and values was fundamentally alien to the American character. His rage at the New Left blinded Boorstin to the central theme in his own work.

"The New Barbarians" was Boorstin's swan song to academia. He resigned his chair at the University of Chicago in 1969, explaining later that it had become "less of a pleasure to go to the faculty-club luncheons and the afternoon teas when you had to sit through heated arguments over Vietnam." It's notable that this was a complaint not about being harassed by radical students but by colleagues. He got a position as director of the National Museum of History and Technology at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

Boorstin emerged from the 1960s with his world view unchanged. He was able to complete the intellectual project he had begun twenty years earlier: a three-volume comprehensive history of American culture and civilization grandly titled *The Americans*. In 1973 he published Volume II, *The Democratic Experience*, a 600-page history of American culture during the century following the Civil War. When the narrative reached the 1950s it discussed foreign aid, atomic power and Sputnik but failed to mention McCarthyism, anti-Communism or HUAC.

President Gerald Ford nominated Boorstin in 1975 to be Librarian of Congress. Previously, the post had been an administrative one held by a prominent librarian; Ford's nomination of an active Republican and outspoken foe of the antiwar and civil rights movements set off a storm of controversy. The Congressional Black Caucus called Boorstin's nomination "disastrous," arguing that his remarks in the past showed "misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the goals of black and other activists" and that, "given Mr. Boorstin's attitude on affirmative action," minority hiring at the library was likely to suffer. Black library employees, 2,500 strong, unanimously declared their opposition to Boorstin's confirmation on the same ground. The 35,000-member American Library Association also opposed Boorstin's nomination on the ground that the Librarian of Congress should be a professional library administrator.

So, Boorstin returned to Capitol Hill for a second Congressional hearing on his political and intellectual past twenty-two years after the first one. In preparation for a confrontation with his critics, Boorstin had filled out a "clearance questionnaire" prepared by the White House counsel. Among other things it asked, "Have you ever had any association with any person or group . . . which could be used, even unfairly, to impune [*sic*] or attack your character?" Boorstin answered, "Hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities." It's notable that he listed as the black mark on his record his "association" not with the Communist Party but rather with HUAC. The Washington *Star* made the same judgment, reporting that "his listing of the names of fellow Harvard Party members is bitterly remembered by many."

At the hearings a spokesman for the Black Employees of the Library of Congress, Howard Cook, discussed Boorstin's political past. He quoted from "The New Barbarians" and commented, "Dr. Boorstin seems to be suggesting that radicalism which had its roots in the Communist Party was all right. . . . Dr. Boorstin has belonged to the CPUSA. . . . Dr. Boorstin uses the fact that the Communists have a theory [to argue that] that makes them somehow better than the other radicals. I would like to remind you that the Communists have a theory and that theory is to destroy the United States."

Here was an unexpected turn: one of Boorstin's black critics resorting to opportunistic Red-baiting. Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield asked: "I have heard from some of

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my more conservative constituents as to your membership in the Communist Party during 1938-39. I believe, while as a student instructor at Harvard, you were also studying Marxism." Boorstin in response launched into the only explicit statement he has made about his HUAC appearance since he testified in 1953. Joining the C.P. at age 23 was, he said, "part of the process of growing up. It was a very unimportant episode in my life." When he had been called before HUAC, he recalled, "it never occurred to me to take the Fifth Amendment. . . . It was my duty to respond. . . . I felt that in our country neither professors nor students are above the law." But in fact the law did not require naming names. Boorstin's defense of his actions in 1975 was, if anything, further to the right than his 1953 testimony had been. In any event, the Senate confirmed him, and in November 1975 he was sworn in.

Boorstin's move into the higher circles of Washington Republican politics coincided with a sharp deterioration in the intellectual quality of his work, as evidenced by his 1983 book, *The Discoverers*. An unexpected best seller, its first sentence read, "My hero is Man the Discoverer." The book told the story of "countless Columbuses," men who had "the courage, the rashness, the heroic and imaginative thrusts" to penetrate the unknown. Section titles in *The Discoverers* sounded as if they had come out of children's books: "Sea Paths to Everywhere" and "Inside Ourselves."

Among Boorstin's countless thrusting Columbuses, in the chapter on "History as Therapy," was Karl Marx. Boorstin treated Marx with unexpected enthusiasm, but then everything in this uplifting book was upbeat. "Marx's Dutch mother . . . spoke German with an accent all her life," Boorstin told his readers, while Marx as a student in Bonn "spent 24 hours in the university jail . . . for drunken rowdiness." Those facts contribute nothing to explaining Marx's significance; apparently Boorstin felt that without colorful details readers might find his presentation of Marx's ideas boring. Because Boorstin presented ideas as "episodes of biography," he barely mentioned the historical context in which Marx worked. Marx was significant because of his internal "need to *know*," as one of the "men with an insatiable hunger for knowledge." His intellectual work, in Boorstin's view, had little to do with the revolutionary and working-class movements of his time; it was simply the expression of an innate drive. This approach creates nothing but obstacles to a historical understanding of Marx and his project.

Holding on to his place in Reagan's Washington became a full-time job for the Librarian of Congress. Reports surfaced of resentment at the library over "the high-style lunches and black-tie dinners he throws for congressmen and other dignitaries and over what is regarded as a thirst for publicity." *The Washington Post* quoted Ruth Boorstin as saying that her husband received a Christmas gift from President Reagan (a jar of jellybeans) and that Rupert Murdoch was interested in turning *The Discoverers* into a movie. *The Washingtonian* reported, "Recently he endeared himself to the White House by sending a clever, jesting note to Nancy Reagan praising her self-parody at the Gridiron Club dinner as a political event comparable to William Jennings Bryan's 'cross of gold' speech." There's nothing new about ambitious intellectuals flattering the powerful.

Boorstin's most controversial act as Librarian of Congress occurred in 1986, when, in response to Reagan budget cuts, he cut library hours by 30 percent and eliminated most evening and weekend hours. "Dr. Boorstin sought to make the Library an elitist institution by closing it off to people who couldn't use it 9 to 5 weekdays," said Russell Mokhiber, who chaired the Books Not Bombs Campaign to Save the Library of Congress, a group of library users. The library had been open evenings, Mokhiber pointed out, since 1897.

The first day the library was scheduled to close early, more than a hundred demonstrators refused to leave and gathered in the ornate reading room "to express their love for the Library of Congress and their outrage at the early closing," Mokhiber said. William Hirzy, one of the protesters, summed it up in a speech: "Free access to information is a foundation of democracy."

Boorstin had left the University of Chicago in 1969 to escape precisely that kind of protest. He had criticized cuts in the library's 1986 budget, but instead of supporting the protests he reverted to the tactics of university administrators in 1968 and ordered the demonstrators arrested. Police charged eighteen of them with unlawful entry, but Boorstin wasn't satisfied; he also banned seven of the leaders from using the library. The seven challenged the ban in Federal court, and in July 1986, U.S. District Court Judge Harold Greene issued a stinging rebuke to Boorstin, calling his action "utterly unconstitutional." "Perhaps in the Soviet Union or South Africa people are banned," Greene wrote in his decision, "but they are not being banned in the United States." He ordered the library not only to readmit the banned protesters but to pay their legal expenses. The protests proved to be effective; Congress appropriated almost $1 million to restore some of the library hours that Boorstin had cut.

Boorstin's Harvard class held its fiftieth reunion in 1984. In the "class report," each member presented his reflections; one quoted from Boorstin's HUAC testimony naming his Harvard college roommates. That entry was the talk of the gathering; some called it "inappropriate" but others said the essay was "great" [see Robert E. Treuhaft, "A Reunion to Remember," *The Nation*, July 7-14, 1984]. The program listed a symposium with "Dan Boorstin, Librarian of Congress, who has been and done many other exalted things." After the class report referring to his HUAC testimony was published, Boorstin's symposium was canceled, and he did not attend the reunion.

His critics can find some satisfaction in the fact that Boorstin has never been able to escape fully the legacy of his HUAC testimony. To understand his career and scholarship, then, one must see Boorstin not just as the quintessential conservative historian of the 1960s, not just as the intellectual in power in Reagan's Washington, but as the friendly witness. □

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# BOOKS & THE ARTS.

## First Fight, Then Fiddle

CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK

GWENDOLYN BROOKS: Poetry and the Heroic Voice. *By D.H. Melhem. University Press of Kentucky. 270 pp. $25.*

A LIFE DISTILLED: Gwendolyn Brooks, Her Poetry and Fiction. *Edited by Maria K. Mootry and Gary Smith. University of Illinois Press. 286 pp. $27.50.*

First fight. Then fiddle. Ply the slipping string
With feathery sorcery; muzzle the note
With hurting love; the music that they wrote
Bewitch, bewilder. Qualify to sing
Threadwise. Devise no salt, no hempen thing
For the dear instrument to bear. Devote
The bow to silks and honey. Be remote
A while from malice and from murdering.
But first to arms, to armor. Carry hate
In front of you and harmony behind.
Be deaf to music and to beauty blind.
Win war. Rise bloody, maybe not too late
For having first to civilize a space
Wherein to play your violin with grace.

In 1950, Gwendolyn Brooks became the first black to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry; she is still the only one. She won it with *Annie Allen* (from which this much anthologized sonnet is taken), a varied and inventive sequence of poems evoking a poor black woman's progress from exquisite illusion to the recognition of a harder yet more satisfying reality. Annie as a girl sleeps late and lazy, dreaming in an efflorescence of language that Brooks has grafted onto the traditional English ballad and ironically qualified by what would later be called Black English. "Late Annie in her bower lay"—while her mother shrieks in trimeter, "Be I to fetch and carry?" and tells her to "get a man to marry." But no ordinary man will do for this proud daughter:

"Whom I raise my shades before
Must be gist and lacquer.
With melted opals for my milk,
Pearl-leaf for my cracker."

But of course in the following "Anniad" (for which Brooks invented her own seven-line stanza), she gets no "paladin,/Prosperous and ocean-eyed," no "hot theopathy," but a man who goes off with a "maple banshee," "hissing gauzes in her gaze,/Coiling oil upon her ways," leaving Annie to "the minuets of memory." All she has left is poverty and those "bouncy sprouts," her children. The sharp imperatives of the sonnet I have quoted, one of a sequence titled "The Children of the Poor," may be addressed to them; or they may be addressed to herself. At any rate, the choice they present, and sternly resolve, turned out to be Gwendolyn Brooks's own. Fiddle afterward. First fight.

Brooks won the Pulitzer Prize at 32; *Annie Allen* was her second book. She was 26 when a Midwestern Writer's Conference award brought her to the attention of Knopf and then Harper's. She had been writing for almost twenty years, and was fully qualified to sing threadwise with feathery sorcery. Encouraged by a mother who intended her to be "the *lady* Paul Laurence Dunbar," she had been fiddling steadily since she was 7. She was 11 when her first poem was published. Year after year she wrote about everything poets write about—"love poems," she tells us in her autobiographical *Report From Part One*, "war poems, nature poems, patriotism poems, 'prejudice' poems." When white editors liked the "Negro poems" and solicited a collection, she dashed off eleven fine off-rhyme war sonnets (evoked by a letter from a soldier friend) and the long, accomplished "The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith," and sent them off. Harper's brought out her first collection, *A Street in Bronzeville*, in 1945.

Bronzeville was a name for the black district of Chicago where she grew up and lives still—a place where, as she wrote in "Kitchenette Building," any dreams that subsist must compete with the strong exigencies summarized as "'rent,'" "'feeding a wife,'" "'satisfying a man,'" with "yesterday's garbage ripening in the hall" and the even more touching immediacy of simply taking a bath. There isn't time to nurture dreams in Bronzeville. Not, at any rate,

for a minute.
Since Number Five is out of the bathroom now,
We think of lukewarm water, hope to get in it.

As these examples show, Gwendolyn Brooks's long apprenticeship had made her master of her instrument. She knew how to exploit a rhyme's power of closure, and the possibilities of alliteration and the internal echo. She could tighten her rhyme or loosen it, vary her pentameter or abandon it, play off an almost mandarin vocabulary against gritty black Chicago dailiness for a diction of continual surprise. *Annie Allen* was followed by a novel, *Maud Martha*; a collection of poems for children, *Bronzeville Boys and Girls*; and, in 1960, *The Bean Eaters*, which included the much reprinted, chilling elegy on black youth, "We Real Cool." Her next book, *In the Mecca*, was nominated for a National Book Award, and she has continued publishing poems into the 1980s. She has had a longer career of published verse than any living poet I can think of, and continues today to give readings that sweep her audiences with excitement. Two books of criticism have appeared about her this year. Yet just try to get a copy of anything she has written since 1963, when Harper & Row brought out her *Selected Poems*—which omits important poems from each of the preceding collections. With all the interest in black and women's studies, she is less known today than she was in the 1950s, when her books rated reviews in, among others, *Saturday Review, Poetry, The New York Times Book Review* and *The Nation*. Though *The World of Gwendolyn Brooks* (1971), her last book with Harper & Row, is technically still in print, it's not available in bookstores and unobtainable from the publisher. As for her later poetry, even to sample it requires the resources of a college library and interlibrary loan.

In part this is a melancholy function of the years. But it is also the result of a conscious choice, one both brave and risky—to change both her publisher and, as far as she could, her style to

*Clara Claiborne Park teaches English at Williams College.*

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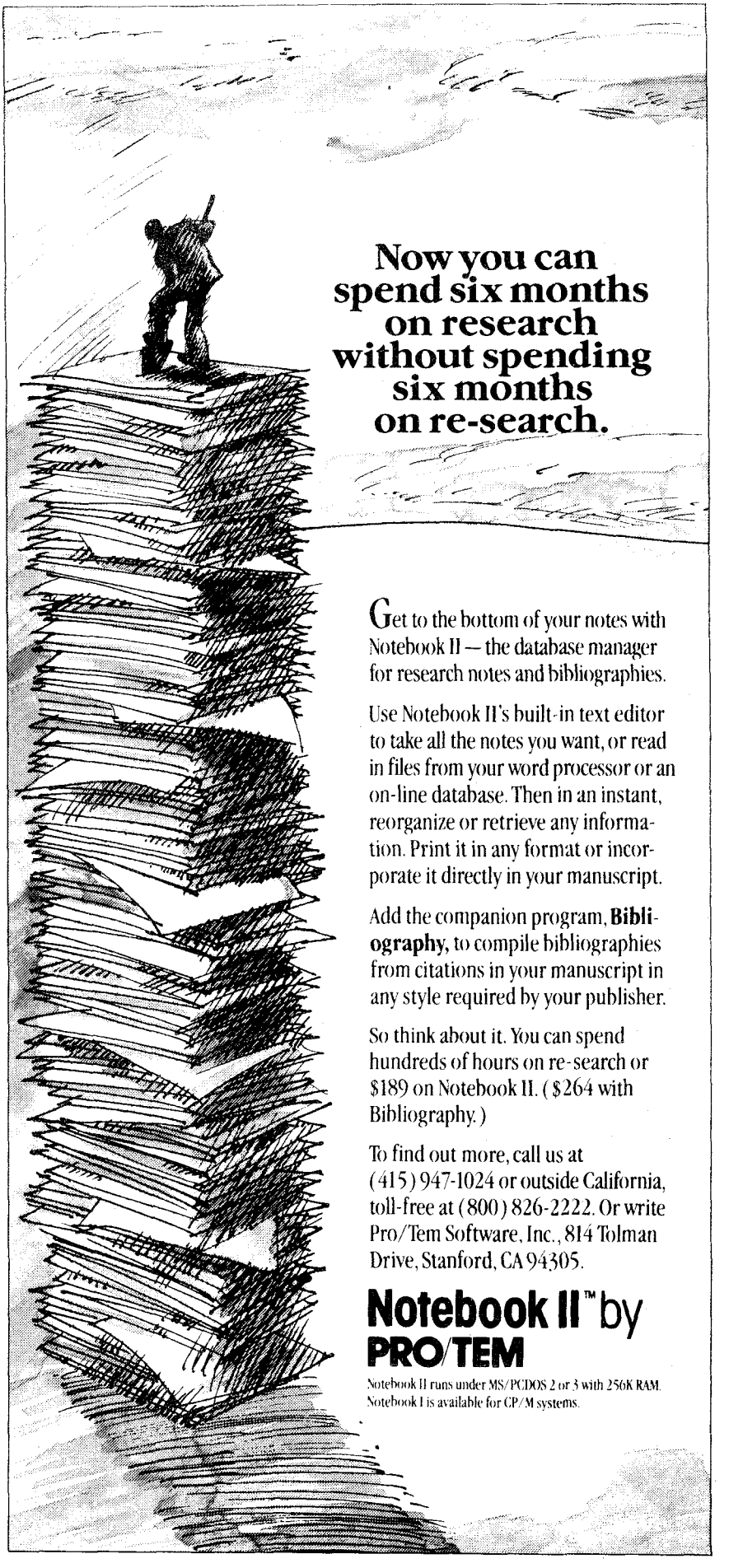
make her voice heard among her own people, even at the sacrifice of its sound in the larger white community. The impulse toward poetry would no longer be the "high and private suffusion" she had once called it. "My aim," she announced in 1972, "in my next future, is to write poems that will successfully 'call' (see Imamu Baraka's 'SOS') all black people . . . in taverns . . . alleys . . . gutters, schools, offices, factories, prisons . . . pulpits . . . mines . . . on farms, on thrones," and wherever else they might be.

For Gwendolyn Brooks, calling black people meant supporting black publishers; amicably and appreciatively, but firmly, she severed her twenty-five-year connection with Harper & Row to move to Dudley Randall's Broadside Press in Detroit. Ever generous (as Poet Laureate of Illinois she used her own funds to establish substantial prizes for promising high-school poets) she donated to the press the proceeds from the sale of her first Broadside book, *Riot*, which grew out of the disturbances in Chicago after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Yet it's hard to get poetry into taverns and factories, whatever the color of the press. The volumes of poetry she has published since leaving Harper & Row are slim indeed, often only a few pages, and the publishing history has clearly been uneasy. It is disappointing that D.H. Melhem's comprehensive, poem-by-poem survey, while it gives detailed coverage to correspondence with white editors, only hints at her relations with black publishers. Melhem's useful bibliography records a shift in the mid-1970s from Broadside to Haki Madhubuti's Third World Press, as well as two publications with Black Position Press, an offshoot of Brooks's own magazine, *The Black Position*. *Blacks*, the long overdue collection to make available the full texts of her major writings, with a selection of more recent poems, was published this year under still another imprint, the David Company of Chicago, and I have not yet been able to order it through a bookstore or find it in a library. The place, and the name—her father's—like a previous imprint, Brooks Press (for her excellent *Young Poet's Primer*, directed to high-school students) suggest a recourse to private printing. If so, it is a paradoxical result for a poet whose courageous choice was to remake herself to assume a public voice.

She places the turning point in 1967,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on the way to "In the Mecca." It was planned as her most ambitious poem, "leisurely and massive," a kind of verse-novel, "book-length . . . two thousand lines or more, based on life in Chicago's old Mecca Building," a crumbling monument of Gay Nineties white grandeur abandoned to black poverty, crammed with more than a thousand souls, with "murders, loves, lonelinesses, hates, jealousies," where "hope occurred and charity," and "theft, material and moral." "To touch every note in the life of this block-long block-wide building would be to capsulize the gist of black humanity." "What high hopes I had for 'In the Mecca'!" she exclaims in *Report From Part One*. It was to present "against a mosaic of daily affairs," "characters that grow and surprise," "story on top of story," wit, humor, horror. It would display the "mastery of 'style'" she had earned the right to mention, with "an end-stanza to end all end-stanzas," "like the self-pacification of the sea, after wild threshing."

The finished poem, though varied and interesting, falls short of the plan. The narrative thread is strong—a mother's search through the Mecca for a lost child at last found murdered—but the promised stories and characters have contracted into sketches and vignettes, striking but fragmentary, and the final stanza is oddly inconclusive. Something happened.

Neither Melhem's book nor the essays of *A Life Distilled* quite says what. Nor does Brooks herself, and I may be overreading the amused and good-tempered hints in her *Report* from a part of her life she came to regard as a mere beginning. A poet's road from plan to performance is very private, and this one included a mild heart attack. But it is clear that in the spring of 1967, when she was hard at work on "In the Mecca," she experienced, at the Fisk University Second Black Writers' Conference, a different kind of shock. The conference presented an experience which, while exhilarating, was profoundly disturbing for a successful poet of 50. At an assemblage of black writers, Brooks might well have expected to be a star. She came straight from a reading at South Dakota State College, where she "had been 'loved.'" "But blood-boiling surprise was in store for me." The star was not a Pulitzer-winning black lady poet with straightened hair, but Imamu Baraka, then LeRoi Jones, and "Up against the wall, white man! was the substance of the Baraka shout." Overnight, she felt herself "a coldly Respected old Has-been," a Helen Hokinson dowager (the white comparison is telling) "adrift in an inscrutable and uncomfortable wonderland." Four years later, her very readable *Report* ends "I have hopes for myself," noting that she is now "qualified to enter at least the kindergarten of new consciousness." But a sudden relegation to kindergarten cannot have been a sustaining experience for a poet trying to finish the most ambitious work of her career. Brooks spent the summer working on "Mecca" and sent it off in September.

A remarkably condescending introduction to *Report* gives the feel of those days, as Don Lee (now Haki Madhubuti) tells the world exactly what was wrong with her work. It must have made hard reading for a poet laureate who had been writing about black experience since before Don Lee was born. *Annie Allen*, wrote Lee, was "written for whites," and for "those 'negro' blacks who didn't believe that one is legitimate unless one is sanctioned by whites first." It "appealed to a wide cross-section" (this was blame, not praise, shared by Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin). It was Negro rather than Black Art. *The Bean Eaters* showed progress, but it was still integrationist. This was not black literature for the 1970s.

"One wants a Teller in a time like this," Brooks had written long before in *Annie Allen*. "People protest in sprawling, lightless ways," so man wants a Teller, "crying up to Any one—/'Be my reviver; be my influence,'" to help "take out a skulk, to put a fortitude in." That poem ends with a pentameter shiver: "And he will follow many a cloven foot."

Melhem and others read these lines as a straightforward call for a heroic voice, and perhaps Brooks too now disavows the darker reading. At any rate, she received the criticism of the Black Artists with extraordinary grace. For there was indeed no likelihood that with her old voice she could be the longed-for Teller. Don Lee was right; she was intellectual, disconcerting, subtle to the point of obscurity, all the things whites liked and blacks now found unusable. So she made the hard choice to be a different kind of poet—to write more closely within the language of the larger black community, to tone down the surprises, the startling words like "barmecide" and "thaumaturgic," the sure coinages like "elsetime" and "singlicity." The occasional remnants of her old cryptic compression are

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unobtrusively submerged in the directness of her call to those she wants to reach. For years, she had put sonnets at the center of her many successful poetry workshops; her students had tackled "Shakespearian and Petrarchan, with Spenserian optional." Don Lee regarded sonnets and ballads as European baggage, and the young street blacks to whom she now "told . . . almost timidly, what I knew," made clear that "the European 'thing' was not what they were about. 'Iambic pentameter,' they twittered, 'Well, now. . . .'" So "I gave up imposing my exercises."

"Mecca" was to have been a showplace of technique: "random rhyme, off-rhyme, a long-swinging free verse, blank verse . . . the couplet, the sonnet, the ballad." But though a ballad or two made it into the finished poem, with a good deal of blank verse, she had written her last sonnet and said so: "Not the pet bird of poets, that sweetest sonnet,/shall straddle the whirlwind." Once she had considered the specifics of prosody "guards against free verse imperilings," but if free verse was what the contemporary whirlwind seemed to demand, that was what she would now write. Brooks had lost faith in the kind of music she had loved and was so well qualified to sing. It would be some twenty more years before the irony became perceptible; free verse was in fact the *lingua franca poetica*, no shade blacker than the sonnet, as mainstream, as inescapably white American as Walt Whitman, Allen Ginsberg and Robert Bly.

Times change; *The Hudson Review* has announced an article on the revival of formal poetry by Dana Gioia, and though most, if not all, of the critics in the two books under review are black, they direct their chief attention to the poetry of Brooks's first fifty years. Not that she would care. Nothing suggests she would change the words she wrote in 1971: "That's the glorious thing about today: we aren't concerned about what whites think of our work." And if a new generation of black critics also finds the work of her Part One more interesting than the thin harvest of Part Two, she can shrug and savor the enthusiasm—close to adoration—of the audiences at her extraordinary readings, and be satisfied with her choice.

She sells herself short in *Report*. The "black aesthetic" was not yet heard of when, long before, she had made the choice, in her own, achieved style, in her chosen form, the sonnet. *First fight.*


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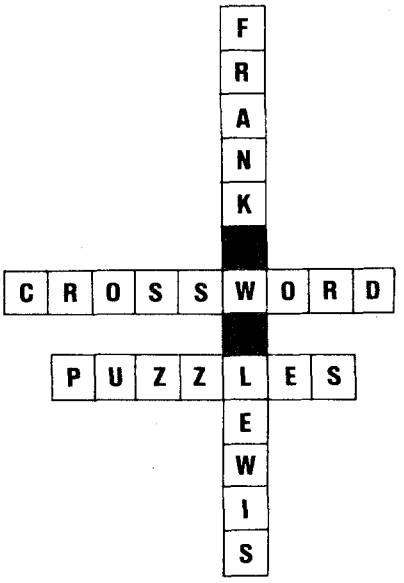


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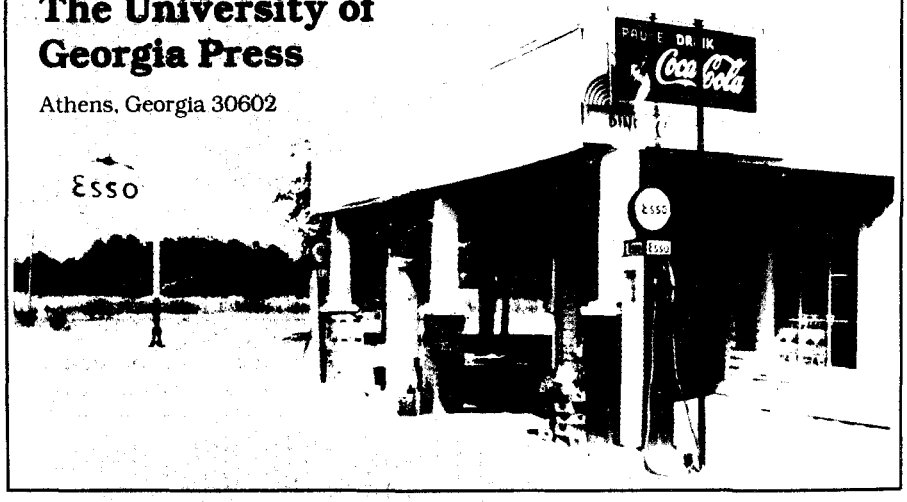


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*Then fiddle.* My students (white) have a lot of trouble with that poem, especially since I cagily defer specifying the poet's color. They can see that it's a real English teacher's illustration of the sonnet form, admirably Petrarchan, ninth-line volta and all, but they don't see what she's after. It shocks them, for one thing: They can't imagine anybody actually *saying* that fight comes before fiddle. They know that war is bad and beauty good and will strain every which way to avoid the plain meaning. And no wonder; if the statement is clear, Brooks has carefully ordered the poem to muddle the emotional tone. She knew just what she was doing when she reversed her own order, devoted the first eight lines to the last term of the choice and put the fighting in the sestet. How she loved the "dear instrument," and "the music that they wrote," its "silks and honey," the splendors and nuances of that English she was born to and had made her own. She put the fighting last, because the choice wasn't easy, or, for her, natural. The students understand better when I show them her picture. "Oh. Yes." And one of them brought in, from his poli sci class, that sentence of John Adams, written in the early years of the Republic, about how he must study politics and war that his sons might have the liberty to study mathematics and navigation and naval architecture, so that *their* children could study painting and poetry, music, tapestry and porcelain. "Is that it?" he asked. "You bet," I said. "That's it."

The books here not exactly reviewed will be useful to readers already familiar with Brooks's work, but they will not, unfortunately, do what I had hoped they would: introduce her to a wider circle of (multicolored) readers. Melhem's book contains much information, and an account of every single published poem, but she hasn't the knack of paraphrasing in a way that sends you running to the original. The critical essays collected by Mootry and Smith, while uneven, contain some rewarding pieces. The two books should alert booksellers, libraries and readers to make the effort required to get hold of *Report From Part One* (Broadside Press) and the newly collected *Blacks*, to discover, or rediscover, Brooks's humorous, humane and unexpected ways with our common language, and something of "the gist of black humanity" which is her subject. □

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# Eddie-Baby on the Town

EDWARD J. BROWN

HIS BUTLER'S STORY. *By Edward Limonov. Translated by Judson Rosengrant. Grove Press. 346 pp. $17.95.*

Once again, Edward Limonov, the powerful and problematic Soviet émigré writer, has offered up a piece of self-proclaimed autobiographical fiction about his life "in freedom." And once again, he has employed every device of obscenity and scatology at his command to undermine both the pieties of American life and the approved public image of the Soviet émigré. In 1979, Limonov's *It's Me, Eddie* outraged many of his fellow exiles, who found it slanderous and pornographic. One prominent critic declared, "If freedom means the freedom to write that book, then I am against freedom." Others, however, expressed their support for the book and declared its author one of the most important of the writers to have left the Soviet Union in the so-called third wave and almost the only one to articulate in his fiction a certain experience of exile.

Limonov's two novels about his life in America (*It's Me, Eddie* and *His Butler's Story*) explore the disorientation and unhappiness that are frequently the lot of those who have "chosen freedom." Between the strait-laced Solzhenitsyn in Vermont delivering jeremiads against "pluralism" and other evidences of "degeneration" in the West, and Eddie Limonov slaking his omnisexual appetites on the underside of New York City, while inveighing against the "vel'fer" that supports him, there is not really a great distance. Both articulate feelings that exiles generally disguise or suppress: nostalgia for the homeland, together with genuine contempt for American institutions and an appalling lack of interest in learning about how those work.

According to his more or less fictional biography, Limonov was an adolescent thief, a psycho, a tailor and an underground poet before leaving the Soviet Union in 1974. Two novels set in the Soviet Union, *The Adolescent Savenko* and *The Young Scoundrel*, both of which will soon appear in English, are apparently based on his life in the Soviet criminal world, on his sojourns in jail and in a mental institution, and on his career as a dissident poet in a flourishing cultural underground. As with the pair about his life in the United States, these books view the clean world from the underside. *Savenko* explores the psychology of a Soviet adolescent who moves from his working-class family into the criminal world; nothing in the book mitigates our horror at the simple motivations for theft, rape, mutilation and murder. The novel also gives us, as though incidentally, a vivid look at life in a working-class suburb of Kharkov: the reek of vodka and violence, the ugly housing and the scramble to get it, and especially the way in which corruption in the "law-abiding" sector feeds the criminal underground. In *The Young Scoundrel*, Eddie has blossomed into an unpublished poet moving among the disaffected intelligentsia of Kharkov, who spurn Soviet respectability in a way that foreshadows Eddie's lavish contempt for the New York establishment. The essence of Limonov's work, whether set in the West or in the Soviet Union, is its vivid articulation of the mute misery and hatred felt by those on the bottom for the scrubbed and fancy world of those on top. From their point of view, as Eddie puts it in *It's Me, Eddie*, "There isn't a hell of a lot of difference between here and there [the Soviet Union]."

Limonov has assured us—mistakenly, I think—that the practice of deducing the author's biography from his fiction is quite sound in his case. He says that he writes only about himself, "since he has studied that character better than any other," and insists that there are no "purely invented" situations in his books; he does admit that he has simplified many things, and eliminated others, thus acknowledging the novelist's work of selection and structuring. But because Limonov identifies himself with the "Eddie," sometimes "Eddie-baby," of his narratives, and provides only flimsy cover for the real people who appear in them (this has cruelly embarrassed some of them), a reader is likely to assume that Limonov and his tormented narrator are one, that the author is as morally vacuous as his central character. Such a conclusion involves a serious critical misunderstanding. Limonov is not the luckless dropout whose character he so vividly creates in his fiction. In fact the real Limonov, as far as we can tell, was actually a good tailor and poet and has managed his affairs quite well in emigration. The Eddie who fantasizes shooting up his rich master's house with an AK-47 or who, in the final pages of *His Butler's Story*, takes careful aim at the repulsive Secretary General of the United Nations, offers a fictional statement as to how slugs and underdogs feel about the world of those who have made it. The latter scene is a powerful realization not of Limonov, of course, but of the Lee Harvey Oswalds of the world.

In *His Butler's Story* Eddie is a Russian poet obliged to work as butler, general handyman and factotum in the palatial East River residence of Steven Grey, a WASP multimillionaire whose fabulous income derives from many enterprises. Steven's house guests range from the Shah of Iran and a variety of American and foreign moguls to a visiting Soviet poet—Yevgeny Yevtushenko with, as Eddie assures us, his C.I.A. impresarios, very thinly disguised—who provide him with the cachet of high culture. The image of Steven Grey, seen from the viewpoint of a proud and penniless Russian poet, is a creation of great literary power. Huge, oppressive, abusive and totally self-centered, Steven arouses in Eddie an insufferable physical revulsion. But Eddie not only hates him, he also envies him his jet-set connections, his money and limitless sexual opportunities.

Eddie needs to prove to everybody "just what sort of person it was they were neglecting." He is in constant communication with contemptible editors and publishers who keep rejecting his poetry and prose, but his principal activity is the pursuit of happiness through sexual adventures described in explicit and disgusting detail. Limonov's sexual scenes are emetic rather than aphrodisiac. Neither transports of love nor the pleasures of simple ravishment can be found anywhere in this book. Of his principal sex object in the novel, Jenny, Eddie says, "I made love to her but I didn't want to." And it turns out that she never wanted to either, but did it because she loved Eddie and thought he liked it. Then there is a "little twat named Mary Ellen," whom he didn't

*Edward J. Brown is professor of Russian literature at Stanford University and author of* Russian Literature Since the Revolution *(Harvard University Press).*

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want to fuck, and a number of others whom he did, but without conviction and almost without pleasure. There are some who flit in and out as fantasies or nymphets, but the novel is simply an account of Eddie's "struggle against the world and everybody in it," and Jenny and the rest are only episodes in his contest with Steven and the others who control that world. The German translator of *It's Me, Eddie* distilled the ichor of that book and this one too as the single English obscenity which served in the title of the German edition: *Fuck Off, Amerika.*

Limonov breaks the widespread stereotype of the Soviet émigré as a man of the political right. In his role as Eddie he is a man of the left, not ashamed to work as a trucker, a tailor or a busboy, and he associates with the unhappy and underprivileged and with the radicals who claim to speak for them. He makes friends with blacks who are unacceptable to his fellow Soviet émigrés. As a matter of fact the American novels embrace humanity in a way that is altogether original and refreshing in a writer of Limonov's provenance. Soviet émigrés are as a rule people who have escaped or been expelled from a failed utopia; they are frequently skeptical at best about the liberal hopes still very much alive in Western democracies. In helping to define that émigré pattern by escaping from it, even though by way of *épatage* and obscenity, Limonov's novels have performed an important service.

In almost everything he has written Limonov's style is marked by the effective use of two kinds of linguistic anomaly. Foreign words—American, of course, but spelled out in Cyrillic letters—variegate the Russian text of Limonov's novel and function as the linguistic mark of Eddie's strangeness in a world of vel'fer, biznessmen, leeving-rums and dyning-rums, Dzhenni's rashen-boi-frend, Tsentral-Park, Khadson-reever and Eesreever. One of my problems with this otherwise excellent translation is that these words are presented in their proper English spelling, and thus an important lexical mark of the narrator as a contemptuous alien presence in "Amerika" has been lost. Other Russian émigré writers also use transliterated English words in their Russian text, but with a quite different function. Vassily Aksyonov uses such concoctions as "khash-poppies," meaning a kind of footwear, but the effect is less alienating than exotic. Perhaps the nearest analog to Limonov's verbal device is Henry Miller's use of French phrases in *Tropic of Cancer* as a mark of the narrator's ironic detachment from the Paris scene. Limonov's use of English in his Russian text suggests, also, the newly arrived émigré who will never lose his native accent nor make the new ideas and concepts his own.

The other persistent lexical feature in Limonov's writing is the exceptionally rich and varied use of obscenities, which also carries a heavy charge of revulsion from the normal American world, from, as he would put it, the varied collection of fuck-offs with whom he is obliged to deal in his brave new country. These two features of style, "barbarisms" and obscenities, call attention to the verbal texture itself: as a Jakobsonian linguist would put it, they are iconic rather than arbitrary, or transparent, "signs." And Limonov gives us, incidentally, a perfect model of the Russian language in its rich inflectional power when he uses the vulgar words for the male organ of generation and for the act of copulation as creative linguistic pivots, deriving from the original root form multiple parts of speech through the use of prefixes, infixes and suffixes. Much attention has been given to the linguistic features of Limonov's work, and it does seem likely that the Russian literary language will have been affected by his virtuosity. Russian, in this century, especially since the triumph of Soviet puritanism in the 1930s, has lagged far behind the West in the breaching of linguistic taboos, with the result that Limonov's writing contains a higher shock potential in its Russian context than any translation could possibly convey. In everything he has written Limonov gives new life to literary Russian by opening it up to a powerful vocabulary from the regions of proscribed speech.

Limonov does obeisance to Henry Miller in this book, and there's no doubt that his novels owe something to Miller's. Eddie is compulsive and often miserable in his pursuit of sex and he is uncertain as to what kind gives him satisfaction; in fact, his passionate accommodation of a beautiful young black man in a vacant lot near 51st and Broadway (in *It's Me, Eddie*) contrasts sharply with his sexually frustrating encounters with women. But for Miller's character the sexual smorgasbord includes both mystery and occasions for poetry. And Miller's nihilism is more philosophical than Limonov's: The chaos he mirrors is in the nature of things; the whole world is a kind of cancer eating itself away. Limonov's world is particular and concrete. He seldom budges from that Amerika—or Kharkov—in thought or image. Miller's view of catastrophe is cosmic; Eddie's is local and confined. But the problem I've alluded to above concerning the confusion of author and central character is foregrounded in the work of both writers. Limonov himself has illuminated his relationship to Eddie in his recently published poem in the *Times Literary Supplement* (June 26, translated by G.S. Smith):

HERO NEGATIVE

This is my hero negative
He's always here along with me

I drink a beer,—he drinks a beer
He lives in my apartment room

He goes to bed with girls I do
My dark-skinned member hangs from him

This is my hero negative . . .
And we may see his elegant back
Around the city of New York
On any one of those dark streets. □

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# The End of the Reagan/Bakker/Falwell Era & the Future of Religion

In bygone days, as the Reagan "revolution" and the Christian New Right seemed to sweep all before them, we at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW (an ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics) were urged to abandon our independent stance and throw in with the Wave of the Future. We didn't. As circulation took a downturn, we felt like pariahs. But then, popularity isn't everything and we've always been allergic to ideological stampedes. Now that the Conservative Bulldozer, which in Orwellian fashion would defend democracy by destroying it, has run into the ditch, and New Right TV preachers have had their financial shenanigans and moral squalor revealed, we admittedly feel vindicated.

However, the Religious Right will — after licking its wounds — surely be back to strut and bully again, for its power-lust abides. Armed with the bizarre ideology that America is God's Chosen Nation, it still asserts that so-called born-again Christians must "take power" and "run our own country." It's the old Constantinian, theocratic compulsion.

But Jesus didn't promise power and security to his followers. To the contrary, he offered hardship and danger: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. . . ." The Caesaropapist quest for power is not only alien to America's best traditions, but inimical to authentic Christianity. As Kierkegaard said, "Verily there is that which is more contrary to . . . the very nature of Christianity than any heresy, any schism . . . and that is to *play* Christianity. But precisely in the very same sense that the child plays soldier, it is playing Christianity to take away the danger (Christianly, 'witness' and 'danger' correspond), and in place of this to introduce power (to be a danger for others), worldly goods, advantages, luxurious enjoyment of the most exquisite refinements. . . ."

America's Ayatollah-style Christianity would equate God's cause with a superpatriotic crusade against "Communism," such that one famous New Right preacher hailed the U.S.-sponsored Contra mercenaries as "God's Army." But this is just "playing" Christianity.

Not only is the identification of the faith with American Might idolatrous and self-serving, but it perpetuates the centuries-long scandal of Christendom: Christians blessing privilege and cozying up to Caesar while the world's poor — those the itinerant Jesus loved most — are malignly neglected.

Christians are now at a historical crossroad. We believe it's time to put "Shi' ite" Christianity behind us and return to our Father's business — witnessing to the Gospel, tending to the "least brethren," doing justice, making peace, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Those who write for us include diverse people like Robert N. Bellah, Walker Percy, Christopher Lasch, J.M. Cameron, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Norman Lear, John Lukacs, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Richard J. Mouw, and Robert Coles.

*Newsweek* calls us "thoughtful and often cheeky." We bat around the full range of theological, ethical, and social issues, and defy easy pigeonholing. If you're "grossed out" by superficial, saccharine, and self-aggrandizing religion, and are looking for a "face" of Christianity that is spiritually tough, intellectually sharp, and socially responsible, subscribe to the NEW OXFORD REVIEW today!

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# Snapshots of the Soul

MARK RUDMAN

NEW POEMS: The Other Part (1908). *By Rainer Maria Rilke. Translated by Edward Snow. North Point Press. 221 pp. $18.50.*

Rilke has changed alongside our changing lives. He was in danger of being transformed—especially during the 1960s in America—into a cult figure, a savant, like Rabindranath Tagore or Kahlil Gibran. This is the Rilke who gave advice, the Rilke of the *Letters to a Young Poet* and certain passages in his novel, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, with his injunctions about what you must do "for the sake of a single poem": "You must understand animals, must feel how birds fly, and know the gesture which small flowers make when they open in the morning. . . . You must also have been beside the dying." I once heard an undergraduate remark wistfully, "Oh, I went through a big Rilke phase and can't read him anymore." Rilke is a poet who gives people strength at certain points in their lives, and after that they can't return to him because, I am convinced, they went to him for the wrong reasons.

Several translations that have appeared over the last ten years, especially those by Edward Snow, Stephen Mitchell, Rika Lesser and Robert Bly, have helped to alter this. With a discriminating intelligence, they achieve the balance of intellect and passion necessary to recapture this poet's dialectic of the vast and the small: uncontrollable distances, the wind full of infinite space, and things that belong to the child's world—puppets, toys, marionettes. These translations have brought Rilke back, if not from the land of the dead, at least from the realm of the misconstrued. They have restored him to his works.

Both volumes of *New Poems* are more down-to-earth than the rest of Rilke's work. The Rilke of *New Poems* is not the superspiritual Rilke of *The Book of Hours*, or the yearning, cosmic Rilke of the *Duino Elegies*, or the Rilke who sought the invisible through sound in the *Sonnets to Orpheus*. The specious philosophy falls by the wayside. The Rilke of *New Poems: The Other Part*, influenced by his contact with Cézanne and Rodin, is still tougher-minded, more severe. If the first volume of *New Poems* aspires to transcendence, the second, with its stress on deaths and disappearances, is geared toward survival. In these works, Rilke opposed not only his own inclinations but also the burgeoning interest in psychoanalysis and the unconscious. He didn't want answers to his problems but ways to work, "equivalents in the visible world for what you had seen inside."

He found what he needed to raid the knowable through the visual in the examples of Cézanne and Rodin. His prose on both men serves as a parallel text to these poems. In *Letters on Cézanne*, Rilke insists that we should learn to look at things as if no one had ever looked at them before. He says of Cézanne's work: "It's as if every place were aware of all the other places." And one hears this insight amplified, transformed, in the poem "Archaic Torso of Apollo": "for there is no place/that does not see you. You must change your life." He recognizes that Cézanne's swerving from Impressionism required a return to reality. In a foreshadowing of the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, he observes that Cézanne knows how to cast the "loudness of lemons and apples. . . . Into a listening blue, as if into an ear, so that it receives a silent response from within."

From Rodin, for whom he worked as a secretary, he acquired a disciplined approach to his own working methods. "Work all the time," Rodin enjoined, "and begin with a trip to the zoo!" And his secretary listened. He tried to write as a painter paints: in front of a model. When the word "experiment" is used of Anglo-American poetry, it usually refers to technique. Rilke's experiment is more radical and fundamental: He translates seeing into being. Many of the poems are about single encounters, snapshots of the soul seen with the stranger's alert gaze. They are all eye and no I, and yet the first person pronoun is always implicit.

"The Panther," one of the most dynamic of the *New Poems*, was the first poem to emerge from this enterprise. With panthers on the brain (after having seen a Greek statue of one in Rodin's studio), Rilke went to the zoo. The resulting poem moves from contemplation of the creature as a work of art to the creature itself:

> From time to time the curtain of the pupils
> silently parts—. Then an image enters,
> goes through the taut stillness of the limbs,
> and is extinguished in the heart.

Similarly, *New Poems: The Other Part* begins with an object from the ancient world. "Archaic Torso of Apollo," like all ruins, is the sum of its missing parts. The imagination supplies the wholeness. Reality doesn't disappoint but rather elevates through its incompleteness: "We never knew his head. . . . But/his torso still glows." As in Cézanne's still lifes, there is nothing static in the *New Poems* because the perceived object becomes subject as well and looks back at the perceiver:

> she turns her face straight into your own:
> and you unexpectedly meet your gaze
> in the yellow amber of her round eyestones:
> closed in like some long-extinct insect.
> ("Black Cat")

Rilke looks at things like a lover who simultaneously woos and holds the beloved at arm's length, reserving the right to depart when the poem ends, often after a sonnet's predetermined number of lines, lest he be swallowed up:

> As you walk along,
> a swarm of gnats moves with you, as though
> behind your back everything were being
> instantly annihilated and erased.
> ("The Parks")

Another moment of true feeling occurs in the brave, mysterious "Encounter on the Chestnut Avenue." Here, the boundary between self and other is shattered, "first there forever, then not at all."

If Rilke is the nonpossessive and nonpossessable lover, he is also our great poet of childhood. Destiny, he emphasized, is no more than what's packed into childhood, which exists for him, along with animals (his "creature world") and flowers in a realm of pure duration, where things are as aware of the world as they are unaware of death. But as an adult, Rilke needed death to free himself from self-consciousness. Death's presence, he wrote, can release us from our "anxious" striving "to please . . . so that for a while we act life/transported, not thinking of applause." His dead like be-

*Mark Rudman's most recent book is* By Contraries and Other Poems *(The National Poetry Foundation).*

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ing dead, but they have to labor hard for a taste of eternity. Eurydice in "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes." doesn't want to come up from the underworld, and the refrain for her desirable state, "uncertain, gentle, and without impatience," is as apt as it is lovely. In "Portrait of My Father as a Young Man" Rilke sees himself in the process of dying, even if his hands are fading away more slowly than his father's photograph. His own "Self-Portrait From the Year 1906" is as wide-awake, as purged of vanity, as Cézanne's, and has the same mixture of detachment and involvement, the "matter-of-fact interest of a dog who sees himself in a mirror and thinks: there's another dog." Looking "death in the face" was good practice for looking at life.

Rilke was always "secretly departing" and regarded a posture of departure as an inescapable sign of our awareness of our own mortality. What could be more like a lover's discourse than his poems, so full of longing and so apprehensive of its realization? Rilke loathed possession. Interested only in pursuit, he wanted to control his relationships with others. When anyone tried to draw too close, he withdrew. Paula Modersohn Becker suffered his cold shoulder when she left her husband and came to Paris to establish herself as an artist. Only after her early death would Rilke try to justify his aloofness, with some of his most searing lines, both lament and lesson, in *Requiem* (as translated by Stephen Mitchell):

> We need, in love, to practice only this;
> letting each other go. For holding on
> comes easily; we do not need to learn it.
>
> For somewhere there is an ancient
> enmity
> between our daily life and the great
> work.
> Help me, in saying it, to understand it.

Rilke stands very close in spirit to American transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau but, unlike them, he worked out his vision in an urban atmosphere, among derelicts and corrupted objects: musty zoos, carousels, and parks where parrots "chew a gray something, find it tasteless, toss it away." While T.S. Eliot, in poems written just after *New Poems*, was revolted by the images of death and sensuality he witnessed in London streets, Rilke is shaken but accepting. He retrieves what others discard. He neither recoils at the sight of a corpse being washed nor shrinks from the anonymous dead body's power to make the washers pay heed to death, so that the "one without names/lay there bare and clean and issued laws." Though he lacks a sense of humor, his refusal to take refuge in irony is one of his most appealing traits. Rilke, stalking Paris in the August heat, is like the panther, gazing out from behind the bars of his cage. His work is wrested from a menacing indifference at the world's heart. With his wild energy and awed, rapt gaze, he synthesizes impulses in Baudelaire and Whitman. He is a man of the crowd who is not swallowed up by the crowd; he finds an identity, a wholeness, in being a stranger.

*New Poems: The Other Part* reminds us that sensitivity, receptiveness and listening are not contrary to toughness of mind, that the violence of our insights is what we need to begin to praise. And praising is what in the end came to matter most for Rilke: "But this can still be kept a secret:/how good the grass is and how soft." His growth as a poet was in learning how to be consumed, how not to fear abandon, how not to confuse loss with annihilation, and in recognizing that the turmoil of his calling would only leave him alone at great risk. His work tells us that we are soli-


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tary by nature but that absence is not loss, that in forever taking leave, we encounter being. □

# MUSIC.

## EDWARD W. SAID

**The Barber of Seville**
**Don Giovanni**

Much of the great outburst of intellectual energy in recent literary criticism has focused on the difficulty, even the impossibility, of interpretation. Psychoanalysis, semiotics, linguistics, deconstruction, feminist theory and Marxism have so expanded our notions of what a text or an authorial performance is that saying what was meant in *King Lear* or *Ulysses* is now an enormously complex enterprise. At its best, interpretation has therefore become inventive, a form of deliberate misreading, supplying all sorts of frankly conjectural possibilities as a way of rendering the work's historical distance, the author's silence, the critic's manifest power over the work. Texts that are subject to the tyranny of the unconscious or the tactics of class are no longer read for their lifelike depiction of characters, setting or history. "Wordsworth" has become a convenient shorthand for the writer whose text—a much more significant word—is the tangled meeting place for innumerable and unstable forces, none of them renderable "realistically" in the way that a photograph of a waterfall represents a real waterfall.

Musical performance is, of course, an art of interpretation. Yet it isn't plausible to expect a pianist playing a Beethoven sonata or an opera director staging *Wozzeck* to produce creative misreadings of these works. Most musical performance is still held in by mimetic norms. The pianist tries to play as exactly as possible what he or she thinks Beethoven actually wrote, in the order that he wrote it, first movement first, last movement last. Similarly, opera productions, although they give the director considerable leeway, must still respect character and plot. It would be impossible to do *Aïda* without an Aïda, although in a famous Frankfurt production Wieland Wagner had her skulking in the background, leaving the central position to Amneris. Directors and audiences (to say nothing of singers and dancers) retain a common realistic expectation of what the intactness of a piece is, otherwise there would be no opera, and no paying audience.

So it has been the case that musical revivals have tended to be conservative, trying to get back to some lost or forgotten original. The vogue for early music played on original instruments, the revival of bel canto repertoire and style, the return to Mahler: All these have embodied not just the idea of recuperation but a usually unstated ideology of authenticity. The musical results are often satisfying. But it is not generally noted that even so apparently harmless and "correct" a notion as faithfulness to an original is itself already an interpretation, in which a slew of unverifiable entities (the composer's intention, an original sound, etc.) are set up and bowed to as if they were facts of nature.

Take as an illustration the current Rossini revival. With the exception of *The Barber of Seville*, Rossini's operas were scarcely performed in this country until about thirty years ago. A number of factors—the interest in bel canto, the advent of singers like Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne, the massive reediting of Rossini's scores undertaken by Ricordi, the pioneering historical research of scholars like Philip Gossett—stimulated interest in the other operas, which are now available on records and occasionally performed with some educated attention to his extraordinary music. Rossini's work is still not appreciated as it ought to be or performed with the frequency it deserves, but it is rare to encounter even *The Barber* today without also noting a salutary change in interpretive attitudes to Rossini's music and drama.

As a performance of *The Barber of Seville* at London's Covent Garden in July revealed, even the most well-known Rossini is no longer played as simple comic entertainment, fit for children or softheaded adults. The contemporary Rosina, sung in London with a wryly confident maturity by Lucia Valentini-Terrani, is a cynical mezzo, not a soprano ingénue. The conductor, Gabriele Ferro, one of the Rossini revivalists, converted the orchestra of the Royal Opera House into a brasher, less mellifluous instrument, as if to reflect the chattily rhetorical characteristics of Rossini's ensemble writing: the strings were toned down, the higher winds and brasses (piccolos and trumpets especially) were given prominence and the percussion team was required to perform with sharp accentuation. Aside from Paata Burchuladze, a young Georgian with a tremendously large and resonant bass, as Don Basilio, the cast was unexceptional, but the overall effect was of a new, politically complex and intelligent Rossini. How rewarding it is to see this familiar opera staged not as a semimoronic farce but as a shrewdly calculating and inventive piece of class provocation. It might also be noted that the Covent Garden program was packed with useful historical and cultural information culled from Beaumarchais's correspondence, the memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon and Alberto Zedda's editorial notes for the

### LOVESICK

When I grow tired of my students, as I always do—
staring at their faces till my eye sockets burn,
I remember one girl told me
how she followed a boyfriend home—
found him in tears—
He rocked on the bed,
screamed at her to *Get away.*
So she turned off his light
and closed the door,
and sat on his floor till morning.

When I think of this girl speaking
in her gentle voice with its rough edges
I think how teaching is like crouching sleepless
in a darkened room refusing to get up
knowing nothing will come of this,
—or only a story, maybe.

*Liz Rosenberg*

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Ricordi edition; so literate a program is not to be encountered at the Met, which treats the intellectual content of its programs condescendingly, like mere commercial filler.

Few critics or audiences today object to the results of the Rossini revival, partly because, to my knowledge, his works have not yet been given the kind of revolutionary and antimimetic revision given to Wagner and a few others. Quite the opposite was the case with Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as directed by Peter Sellars at this year's PepsiCo Summerfare festival in Purchase, New York. *The New York Time*'s Donal Henahan was greatly offended by Sellars's staging of the opera as a ghetto drama of pushers and junkies, an idea, according to Henahan, that traduced Mozart completely. Sellars's *Così fan tutte*, set in Despina's Diner circa 1970, was somehow forgiven its licenses by most critics because *Così* is considered a lighter, less consequential work. (Although, as I was reminded by Professor Fred Grab of Bard College, the great director of the East Berlin Komische Opero Walter Felsenstein never attempted a realization of *Così* because he considered it too difficult to pull off.)

Henahan, and Andrew Porter in *The New Yorker*, who found Sellars's *Don Giovanni* the most electrifying he'd ever seen, were touching on important questions about the interpretation of music. How far can one go in transforming a work, and what is it about the work itself that appears to permit some changes but not others? Why are ideological notions about authenticity or fidelity to a text allowed to rule performance standards, and what is it about Mozart's operas in particular (some Strauss and Wagner operas also qualify) that inspires the conservatism of some viewers and the enthusiasm of others when the works are staged with startlingly new, even shocking force?

The great virtue of Sellars's productions is that they can provide some direct insight into these matters. Almost immediately, they put you in touch with what is most eccentric and opaque about Mozart: the obsessive patternings in the operas, patternings that have little to do with showing that crime doesn't pay or that the faithlessness inherent in all human beings must be overcome before true union can occur. Mozart's characters in *Don Giovanni* and *Così* can be interpreted not as individuals with definable characteristics but as figures driven by forces outside themselves that they don't comprehend and make no effort to examine. These operas, in fact, are about power and manipulation that reduce individuality to a momentary identity in the vast rush of things. There is very little room in them for providence, or for the heroics of charismatic personalities. Compared with Beethoven, Verdi or even Rossini, Mozart depicts an amoral Lucretian world, in which power has its own logic, undomesticated either by considerations of piety or verisimilitude. What is it that keeps Don Giovanni bound irrecusably to his licentiousness—exposed with such cold, quantitative abandon by Leporello in "Madamina, il catalogo questo"—or Don Alfonso and Despina to their schemes and fixings? Nothing in the operas provides an adequate answer.

Instead, I think, Mozart has tried to embody an abstract force that drives people without the consent of their mind or will, through the use of stories whose moral pointlessness is highly in evidence. It is for this reason that Beethoven, ever the Enlightenment enthusiast, disliked Mozart's operas. When in *Così* Guglielmo sings his questioning aria "Donne mie, la fate a tanti," he is meant literally and unenlighteningly to be asking why women behave as they do; in the context the aria also refers to the behavior of men, which Guglielmo's own actions do nothing to illuminate. Sellars had the aria sung in the audience, as if the character playing Guglielmo had become a Phil Donahue, getting different answers with equally uninformative results in each case.

Power in Mozart's operas is managed or brokered by enigmatic older men (Alfonso, Sarastro) and by willful aristocrats (Almaviva, Don Giovanni). Their power is arbitrary and cannot be characterized simply; it works according to elaborate protocols which are both headstrong and self-sustaining. Because he lived in the late eighteenth century in a society whose modes of power were feudal, ecclesiastic and increasingly urban, Mozart deployed the elements that were familiar to him—gentlemen and ladies, peasants, servants and (in the case of Sarastro) Masonic pseudopriests. But there is no reason to suppose that he meant these embodiments of power to exhaust the possibilities of social force forever after. Moreover, Mozart's characters are engaged not in action, but in the gamelike activ-


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ity that ensues after a pattern has been set in motion. Theoretically, it is quite possible to imagine the process continuing into the twenty-first century.

And so, why not a diner and Vietnam vets for *Così*, followed by a drug addict *Don Giovanni*? Are these two fictions really any less plausible than Mozart's "originals," as if the original *Così*—mutilated beyond recognition by editors and *régisseurs*—or *Don Giovanni* were somehow easier to understand in eighteenth-century costume? What Sellars has picked up with great brilliance is the void at the center of both operas, a void that allows an infinite series of substitutions, so long as each is internally consistent in its patterns and conceits. *Così* functions in symmetries, with three pairs of men and women acting in concert; hence, the choreographed movements, the synchronized gestural excesses, the topical beach-bumming casualness of Sellars's conception. In *Don Giovanni* Mozart's imagination focuses on the serial and linear quality of the action, in which one episode is like another, one adventure follows another without real development or fixed purpose. Sellars's choice of the drug scene, with a darkened stage and frequently indistinguishable figures, struck me as shatteringly, chillingly pertinent. Don Giovanni's love life is as romantic as a dingy subway platform inhabited by outcasts and misfits who lie in wait for the occasional trick; the attitude of the confirmed junkie shooting up every time he gets a chance is perfectly comparable to the driven rake in his view of women. And so Sellars portrayed it.

But there is another, more exigently contemporary and practical reason for interpreting Mozart as Sellars has. Consider that Sellars himself is the product of a culture with no continuous and independent opera tradition. Until now mainstream American opera production has derived mainly from Europe, and a boring *verismo* (i.e., mimetic) Europe at that. For such a tradition to work here you need money and stars, neither of which are handily available. Sellars's means are therefore modest. His singers in *Così* and *Don Giovanni* were young and of average (even mediocre) voice, with the women in general better than the men. What they lacked in musical polish, they more than made up for in physical agility; many arias were sung by characters rolling around on the stage, with results in pure vocal production that were not always satisfying. Thus it is difficult to pick out anyone from the ensemble who was truly outstanding. In fact, so strong is Sellars's conception of his singers as functionaries in his productions that you can only imagine them singing for him, rather as Dickens's characters remain fixed forever in the stylized world of his novels.

The greatest misgiving I have about Sellars's Mozart concerns his conductor, Craig Smith. Granted that the orchestra at Smith's disposal is both a sparse-sounding and a less than first-class one, and granted also that romanticizing Mozart to make him more beautiful and heavenly than he is is no good outside *Amadeus*. But do we then have to have Mozart at seventy-five miles an hour? The oddest thing about Smith's performances was how similar every aria and ensemble sounded. Invariably the opening tempo was fast and got faster. Invariably the singers could not keep up. Invariably the number was uncadenced and uninflected, leaving the singers a thankless job of pattering out semi-inarticulate words in an imperfectly understood language. Whereas Sellars's notion of style is imaginative and plastic, Smith's seems mechanical and, alas, both unmusical and unfinished.

I must confess to being flabbergasted by the disparity between these two collaborators. Quite possibly I have missed something in Smith's conducting that may be particularly relevant to Sellars's vision. Nevertheless it is a pity that dramatic intelligence of such high quality is served by so uninteresting and heedless a musical execution. Perhaps a greater equivalence will occur when Sellars comes to the Met and James Levine next season, but there will remain for him a puzzling question which his brilliant work has hitherto only begun to answer: how to make congruent Mozart's musical fluency, his astonishingly idiomatic compositional style, his endless melodic invention with the starkly uncompromising severity of his major comic plots. Does the music mock the action? Is the music meant to accentuate the plot's socially acceptable conventions, thus disguising Mozart's subversiveness? Or is there some as yet undiscovered notion of counterpoint or accompaniment that yokes the two elements together so strangely? These questions require interpretations of considerable depth and subtlety, which is why Sellars's work, with its often lurid explicitness and its ingenious distortions of the "original," is so interesting. □

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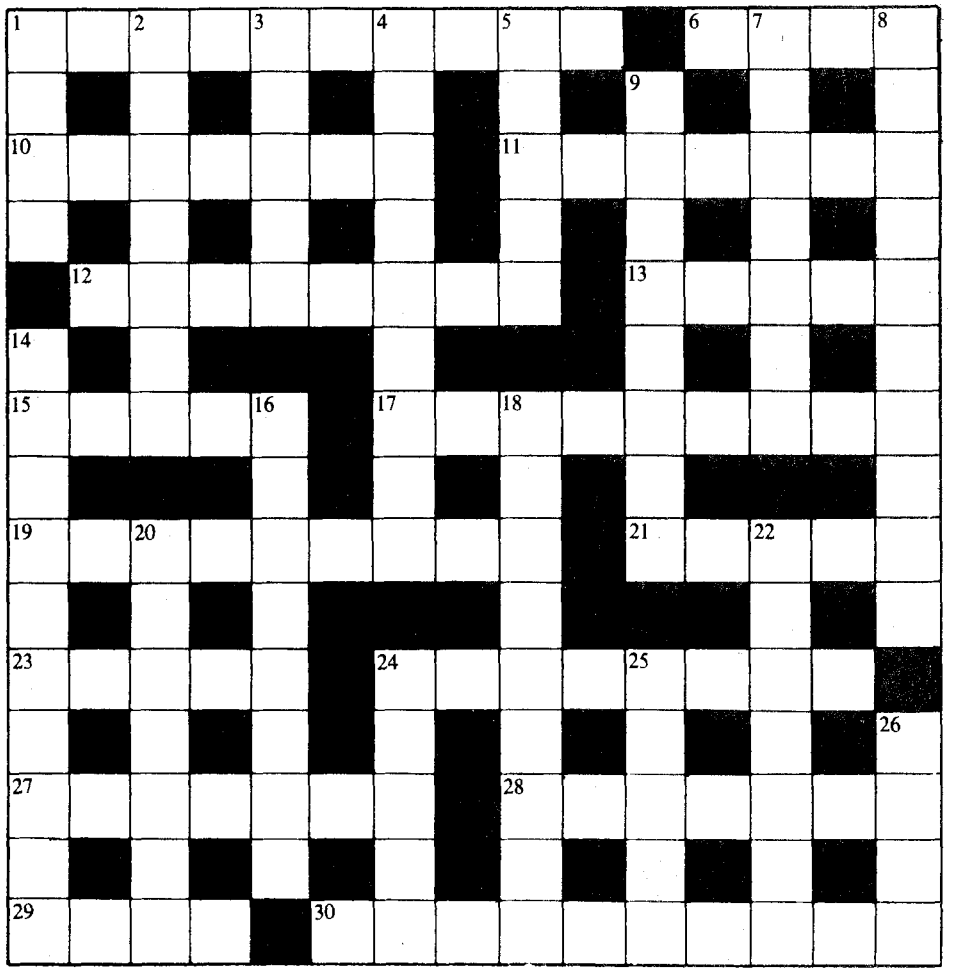

## ACROSS

1 One might see it get on the east side of the river, and quack! (10)
6 Metal found in Oz, in caves. (4)
10 The comeback a fine beer makes is connected with a royal habit. (7)
11 See 16 down
12 With 13 first, does it imply ignorance is bliss? (8)
13, 29, 22 down, 30 and 28 Implying exceptionally good types are not found where the less-than-bright are fast coming in. (5,4,2,5,6,4,2,5)
15 Oily chunk of a whole iceberg. (5)
17 See 16 down
19 Of a tender age, disorderly made. (9)
21 The best type? (5)
23 Not well kept up, like Hamelin. (5)
24 Goes down, perhaps, but the lack of information is supposedly this. (4,4)
27 Counter-change, with what the beater might do. (7)
28, 29 and 30 See 13

## DOWN

1 See 18
2 A purged form, but the rising types might be on it. (7)
3 Such a lust might be wrong, but people near here might have been well-wishers. (5)
4 A person crazy about some place in South America or a sort of fruit from there. (6,3)
5 What's nice about the capital of Holland? (A little corner of it, at least!) (5)
7 Where you might find the position of an infielder, briefly. (2,5)
8 It's so derelict and damaged, it should be protected! (10)
9 Certainly not full rations, but good enough for the kids to go on! (4,4)
14 Does one hope to live on air? (If unsuccessful, one might have to!) (4-6)
16 and 11, and 17 across This is certainly a waste of energy, as they say! (8,5,2,9)
18 and 1 down Evidently a lateral miscalculation if one is. (4,2,3,4)
20 Do they give the general idea of pins and needles, etc.? (7)
22 See 13 across
24 One might expect to move on it, but not while putting something here. (5)
25 Is aware of discordant tones? (5)
26 The smell of a German flower, by the sound of it. (4)

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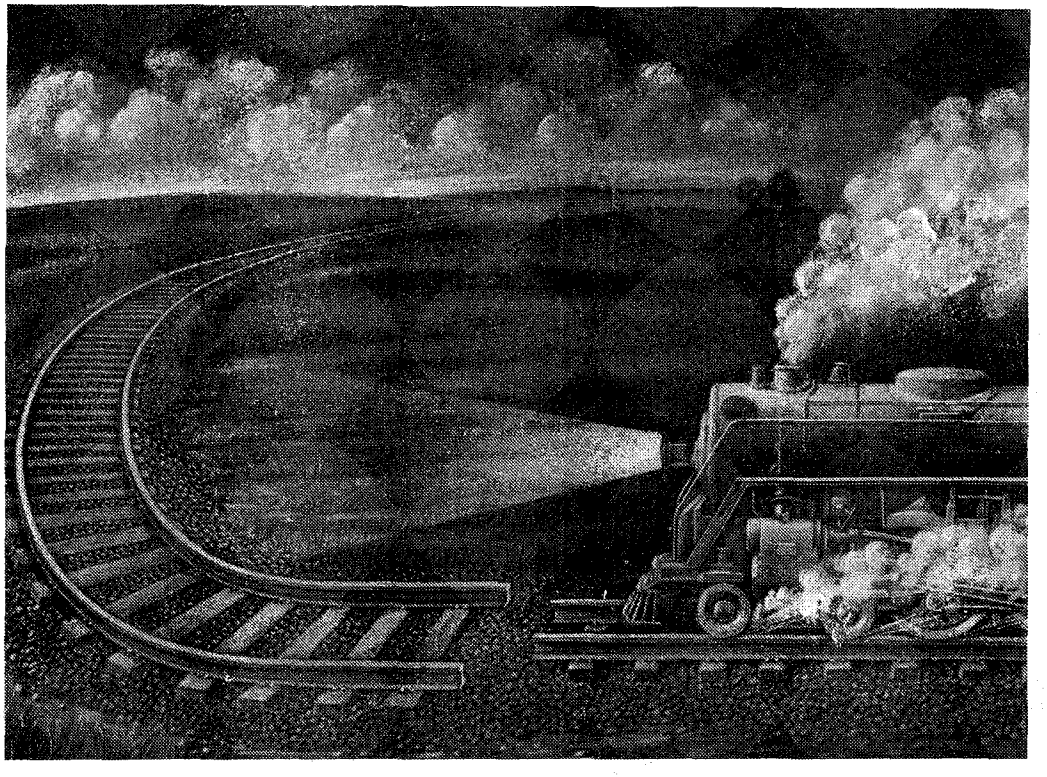

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